

Compassionate Ministry Reader English Version

January 2005 Edition

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Introduction

The following materials have been compiled from a variety of sources gathered through the Office of Education, Nazarene Compassionate Ministries. They are drawn primarily from individual articles under the title of "Samarinating", a coined word that combines the sense of "marinating" or "soaking over time in spices", in other words, "enriching," "flavoring,"—thinking and meditating over what it means to be a good Samaritan.

These articles are gathered primarily to address the issues not only that face the world, but also that confront the Church of the Nazarene, to encourage its members and friends to take seriously the mandates of what it means to be a contributing member of the world community, a Christian and a Nazarene. At its bottom line, they call us to understand "Compassion as a Lifestyle."

The articles are intended to inform, stimulate, provoke, irritate, and energize readers to become "Lifestyle Christians" in all areas of personal and group accountability towards the poor and marginalized in all societies.

This Reader is intended as a living and evolving document that will constantly adapt new contents as issues and inspiration come to us. In most cases, where an author is not specifically mentioned, the articles are written by Dr. Fletcher Tink, who has been employed by, and is contracted with Nazarene Compassionate Ministries International. Additionally, articles have been submitted by Mindy Bowne Hancock, Dr. Tink's Education Assistant and others as well.

Dr. Tink has served as a Nazarene missionary in Bolivia, and currently is adjunct professor of urban and compassionate ministries at Nazarene Theological Seminary, in Kansas City, Missouri. Some of these articles have appeared in similar or reduced form in a variety of magazines, principally, *Holiness Today*. For personal contact or dialogue with him, please feel free to e-mail him at fletcht@aol.com. To contact Mindy, email mhancock@nazarene.org or call 816/333-7000 Ext. 2786.

The International Church of the Nazarene is not responsible for the contents herein nor authorizes every idea or position taken here. Some of the articles are obviously "tongue-in-cheek"; others "push the envelope."

We encourage your participation in producing thoughtful short articles in keeping with the purposes and style of those contained in the reader. This volume and subsequent versions can be downloaded under NCM education at www.ncm.org. The article, "A Pencil in the Hand of God", is not to be published without *Time Magazine*'s permission. Other articles printed in other publications have been given permission for distribution, however, not for profit or sale, but only as a service for educational or instructive purposes.

Additional "Samarinating" articles are also available at the www.ncm.org web site and may be used as they serve the cause of "Compassion as a Lifestyle." Versions of this reader are also available in Spanish, Portuguese, and Russian. We encourage translations as long as they are sensitive to the contextual needs of the area. However, we urge that any articles that are

politically sensitive or reveal information that might endanger ministries in delicate parts of the world be cleared by the Office of Education before being disseminated.

For any typos and factual errors, we stand corrected. Please notify us so that we can follow this effort up with further editions that will reflect accuracy and style that will maximize the points about compassion that we seek to make.

Finally, may the result of your "Samarinating" lead you into deeper commitment to God and others.

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Scriptures on "Compassion"

(From "The Message", by Eugene Peterson, compiled by Dr. Fletcher L. Tink.)

Greed:

"Why is everyone hungry for more? 'More, more' they say. I have God's more-thanenough" (Ps. 4:6).

"The world of the generous gets larger and larger; the world of the stingy gets smaller and smaller" (Prov. 11:24).

"A greedy and grasping person destroys community" (Prov. 15:27).

"Take care! Protect yourself against the least bit of greed. Life is not defined by what you have, even when you have a lot" (Lk 12:15).

"Your greedy luxuries are a cancer in your gut, destroying your life from within. You thought you were piling up wealth. What you have piled up is judgment" (James 5:3).

Materialism:

"A life devoted to things is a dead life, a stump; a God-shaped life is a flourishing tree" (Prov. 11:28).

"Don't be obsessed with getting more material things. Be relaxed with what you have. Since God assured us, 'I'll never let you down, never walk off and leave you" (Heb. 13:3).

"A final word to you arrogant rich. Take some lessons in lament. You'll need buckets for the tears when the crash comes upon you. Your money is corrupt and your fine clothes stink. Your greedy luxuries are a cancer in your gut, destroying your life from within. You thought you were piling up wealth. What you've piled up is judgment" (James 5:1-3).

"The world and all its wanting, wanting is on the way out—but whoever does what God wants is set for eternity" (I Jn 2:17).

"If you see some brother or sister in need and have the means to do something about it but turn a cold shoulder and do nothing, what happens to God's love? It disappears. And you made it disappear" (I Jn 3:17).

Money:

"Mercy to the needy is a loan to God, and God pays back those loans in full" (Prov. 19:17).

"If you stop your ears to the cries of the poor, your cries will go unheard, unanswered" (Prov. 21:13).

"You can't worship two gods at once. Loving one god, you'll end up hating the other. Adoration of one feeds contempt for the other. You can't worship God and Money both" (Mt. 6:24).

"You are familiar with the generosity of our Master, Jesus Christ. Rich as he was, he gave it all away for us—in one stroke he became poor and we became rich." (2 Cor. 8:9)

"Lust for money brings trouble and nothing but trouble. Going down that path, some lose their footing in the faith completely and live to regret it bitterly ever after" (I Tim. 6:10).

"Tell those rich in the world's wealth to quit being so full of themselves and so obsessed with money, which is here today and gone tomorrow. Tell them to go after God, who piles on all the riches we could ever manage—to do good, to be rich in helping others to be extravagantly generous. If they do that, they'll build a treasury that will last, gaining life that is truly life" (I Tim. 6:17-19).

Compassion:

"Compassion doesn't originate in our bleeding hearts or moral sweat; but in God's mercy" (Rom. 9:16).

Sharing:

"The one who blesses others is abundantly blessed; those who help others are helped" (Prov. 11:25).

"When you do something for someone else, don't call attention to yourself. You've seen them in action. I'm sure—'play actors' I call them—treating prayer meeting and street corner alike as a stage, acting compassionate as long as someone is watching—playing to the crowds. They get applause, true; but that's all they get. When you help someone out, don't think about how it looks. Just do it—quietly and unobtrusively. That is the way your God, who conceived you in love, working behind the scenes, helps you out" (Mt 6:2-4).

"Here is a simple, rule-of-thumb guide for behavior. Ask yourself what you want people to do for you; then grab the initiative and do it for them" (Mt. 7:12).

"If you only give for what you hope to get out of it, do you think that's charity? The stingiest of pawnbrokers does that . . . Give away your life; you'll find life given back, but not merely given back—given back with bonus and blessing. Giving, not getting, is the way. Generosity begets generosity" (Lk 6:36, 38).

"The whole congregation of believers was united as one—one heart, one mind! They didn't even claim ownership of their own possessions. No one said, 'That's mine; you can't have it.' They shared everything" (Acts 4:32).

"Help needy Christians; be inventive in hospitality" (Rom. 12:13)

Texts for Biblical Studies in Compassionate Ministry Themes

This is a three part compilation in process. This selection of Scriptures is by no means comprehensive nor are all the brief captions intended to definitively describe the essence of the Scriptures. They serve only to facilitate reflection and discussion, hoping to encourage further study as the reader discovers for him/her self how the Scriptures can be applied. Part 1 covers AIDS through Environmental Protection; Part 2, Health Care through Physiological Care; and Part 3, Private Investment and Ownership through Women's Issues. We invite you to add your own scriptural references or reorganize these in ways that best contribute to your biblical dialogue on the subject. Please let us know of any suggestions you have or changes you would recommend. We can be reached at <compassionatelifestyle@nazarene.org>.

1. AIDS (prevention and care)

Leviticus	13	One should report all diseases to appropriate authorities
Leviticus	14	One should take proper treatments, physical and spiritual
Leviticus	14	Contagious disease may require quarantine
Leviticus	15	Sexual activity should be curtailed until a person is "clean"
Leviticus	18:6-20	There are certain illicit sexual activities that spread disease
Numbers	12	Sometimes disease is a result of jealousy
Deuteronomy	24:9	Sometimes disease is a result of disobedience
2 Samuel	3:29	Sometimes disease is a legacy of social chaos and violence
2 Kings	5:1-19	One man shows his medical desperation
Psalm	102	The sick man cries out to God for help
John	9:2-3	Sometimes disease happens without explanation
Matthew	8:1-4	Jesus associates freely with the diseased
Luke	5:12-16	One man lives in isolation and desperation but finds hope
1 Corinthians	7:1-16	Celibacy is an honorable option

2. Agriculture

Genesis	1:1-2:3	God created a wonderful balance between humans and nature
Genesis	2:15	Humans were to be administrators of God's natural creation
Genesis	3:17-19	Humans are cursed and blessed by creation
1 Kings	21:1-19	Owning land can be a source of threat and death
Psalm	10:4	God is productive creator of natural order
Proverbs	6:6-9	Taking care of land involves hard labor
Jeremiah	14	Sometimes drought is a result of disobedience and carelessness
Jeremiah	30:7-22	God does promise ecological restoration for those who repent
Ecclesiastes	11:1-6	Over time, as one ages, productivity is lost

3. Child Development (Children at Risk/Orphans/Street Kids/Child Sponsorship)

Exodus	20:5-6	There is a multigenerational influence of adult example
Leviticus	20:1-5	Judgment is give on those abusing children

Deuteronomy	6:7	It is important to train children in values
Deuteronomy	33:6-10	Religion without responsibility for children becomes a curse
1 Samuel	1:21-28	Children are gifts that ultimately belong to God
1 Samuel	3:1-18	God can use children for divine mission
Psalm	127:3-5	Children are a blessing and gift from God
Proverbs	23:12-16	Children need to be disciplined
Matthew	21:16	Children can teach older people about praising God
Mark	9:36	Welcoming children is welcoming Christ
Luke	15:1-7	Believers can join with Jesus in finding the neglected
Luke	18:15-17	Children are important to God and the kingdom
Ephesians	6:4	Do not be hard on children

4. Community Development (Group Identity and Mobilization)

Genesis	1:26-27	All humans are made in the image of God
Genesis	41:46-57	Joseph plots out an economic plan that saves a nation
Joshua	7	One man's sin has community consequences
Nehemiah	1–2	Developing and mobilizing community transformation
John	3:1-21	All are "dead" but have "light"
Luke	10:25-37	The neighbor is that person in need
James	2:1-7	Give preference to the poor
Luke	8:40-56	Recognize that need is not confined to specific social classes
1 Thessalonia	ans 4:9-12	Don't disrupt community by financial obligation
1 Peter	1:11-17	Exercise civic duty

5. Community Development (Christian)

Exodus Matthew	18:13-27 6:1-18	The faith community disperses leadership The faith community is transparent and humble
Matthew	7:24-27	True investment is in the Word
Matthew	18:21-35	Christians forgive
Matthew	23:1-12	The faith community is governed by grace not law
Mark	9:33-37	The greatest role in community is being a servant
Luke	3:7-21	Entrance into Christian community through the symbol of baptism
		is significant
Luke 22:15-3	4, I Cor. 11:17-	-34 Affirmation of community through the Lord's Supper
John	4:1-42	The faith community reaches across barriers
John	13:1-17	Jesus sets an example of servant hood
John	15	The faith community is organic
Acts	4:32-35	Community implies the sharing of resources
Acts	8:14-24	The faith community ought to be inclusive but distinct
Acts	11:27-30	True community shares with those in need
Romans	12:1-8	Everyone's gifts complement the other
1 Corinthians	12:12-31	The faith community is inter-dependent and shares its values

6. Economics

Genesis	1	Balanced and orderly resources are made for humans
Exodus	16:1-9	Believers should be content with their food for each day
Leviticus	25	Jubilee restores ecological and economic imbalances
Deuteronomy	5:12-13	Work and rest are important
Deuteronomy	15:1-2	God offers a method for clearing personal financial obligation
Deuteronomy	15:6	God instructs international generosity, but no national debt
Deuteronomy	15:10-18	God instructs provision for the poor and liberty for the slaves
Deuteronomy	24:10-15	Don't exploit borrowers or employees
Deuteronomy	24:19-22	Leave extra for the poor
Proverbs	1:8-19	Don't use violence to make gains
Proverbs	6:6-11	Laziness can cause material loss
Amos	8:4-8	God will punish material exploitation
Matthew	6:19-34	There's more to life than the material
Matthew	16:24-26	There is something more important than material wealth
Matthew	20:1-16	God's rewards are not ours to determine
Matthew	21:28-32	Follow-through is more important than promises
Matthew	25:14-30	Christians are accountable for resources available
Mark	5:1-20	Contemporary economic values are threatened by Christian
		challenge
Luke	12:13-21	Greed is ultimately destructive
Luke	19:1-10	It is important to right personal economic abuses
Luke	21:1-4	Generosity is not just for the rich
Acts	2:43-47	Importance of shared resources for building community
Acts	18:1-4, 24-28	Religious orientation influences economics
1 Corinthians	5:11	Don't spend time with greedy people
2 Thessalonian	ns 3:6-15	Work to be a responsible citizen
1 Timothy	6:3-10	Christianity does not guarantee financial wealth

7. Emergency Response and Disaster Relief

Genesis	6:11-21	Ecological disaster results from cultural violence and cruelty
Genesis	12:10-11	Ecological circumstances may require one to move on
Genesis	41:46-57	There is a need to plan ahead for potential disasters
Genesis	42:1-23	Disaster cuts across national and cultural boundaries
Exodus	7–12	Believers have unusual protection in emergencies
Exodus	10:16	Sometimes crises create insincere repentance
Exodus	14:19	Sometimes God delivers through extraordinary means
Job	1:13-2:10	Job experiences personal disaster
Job	2:11	One needs friends in the midst of disaster
Job	19:23-27	Regardless of our condition, God lives and we will see him
Job	27	Life seems so unjust in one's desperation
Job	30:16-31	All Job receives is disaster
Job	42:7-9	Sometimes friends don't understand
Job	42:10-17	Happy endings are possible

Psalm	42	The psalmist prays for personal deliverance
Psalm	44	The psalmist prays for deliverance of a defeated nation
Matthew	11:20-25	Sometimes disaster is a result of refusal to turn to God
Matthew	24:1-44	Be faithful to the end
Matthew	24:36-43	God's intervention is unpredictable but sure
Matthew	25:1-13	Be ready for God's intervention
John	11:17-44	Jesus weeps in the midst of personal tragedy

8. Environmental Protection (Clean Water, Conservation, Land Management)

Genesis	9:9-17	God pledges protection for all living creatures
Exodus	8:8-15	Ecological imbalance may be caused by stubbornness
Leviticus	26:34-35	Nature needs to be rested
Deuteronomy	22:6-7	See value of nature and conserve it
Deuteronomy	29:23-24	Ecological disaster as result of disobedience
2 Kings	2:19-22	Pure water revives a dying community
Job	12:7-12	Nature expresses God
Psalm	29:3	God can be heard in natural elements
Psalm	104:14-23	God is graciously involved in the balance of nature
Isaiah	11:6-9	Some day nature will be reconciled
Matthew	6:26-30	God cares for even the smallest elements of nature
Matthew	25:14-30	Christians are to use wisely the resources given
Romans	8:20-22	Creation experiences birth pangs
Revelation	21:1-22:5	God is going to introduce a new heaven and earth

Texts for Biblical Studies in Compassionate Ministry Themes

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9. Health Care (Community-Based, Preventative, Curative)

Exodus	15:22-27	Christians avoid disease by faith obedience
Leviticus	13	Obvious diseases should be reported immediately
Leviticus	14:33-53	Bad environment contributes to disease
Leviticus	15	Disease is not just a personal but a community problem
Numbers	12:1-12	Some disease originates from bad attitudes
Deuteronomy	12:15-25	Health is in large measure determined by diet
Deuteronomy	14:3-21	There should be discipline in dietary habits
Deuteronomy	23:9-14	Good hygiene is critical for good health
2 Kings	2:19-22	Nature's elements are part of the healing
2 Kings	20:1-7	Appropriate diet is part of the healing
2 Chronicles	32:24-26	God restores a dying man as a result of prayer and medicine
Psalm	127	God rejuvenates his own
Psalm	139	God knows the intimacies of our bodies
Song of Solon	non 4:1–5:1	It is appropriate to celebrate youth, beauty, and health
Matthew	10:5-15	Christians are to be agents of healing
Luke	5:17-26	There is a connection between physical and spiritual disease
Luke	13:10-21	There is a priority of healing over bureaucratic prohibitions
John	4:1-42	Emotional healing has social consequences
John	5:1-13	Do you want to be healed?
Acts	14:8-10	Faith is an important ingredient in healing
Acts	14:11-17	Healing attests to God's power not human power
1 Corinthians	6:12-20	The human body is God's temple
James	5:13-18	The Christian community is an agent of healing
Revelation	21:1-4	God promises a disease-free life in the New Jerusalem

10. Justice (Peace-making, Reconciliation, and Conflict Mediation)

Genesis	9	God's blessings are intended for all nations
Genesis	13:1-13	Sometimes accommodation brings blessing
Exodus	3:7-10	God is on the side of the oppressed
Joshua	5:13-15	God does not have national preferences
Nehemiah	5:1-13	Part of justice is consciousness raising

Job	29:7-17	What does active justice look like?
Isaiah	11:1-5	The Messiah will bring justice
Isaiah	53:7-12	God's personal servant is treated unjustly
Amos	8:4-8	God will punish injustice
Micah	6:8	Do justice and mercy
Luke	1:39-56	God is the ultimate arbiter of justice
Luke	3:10-14	It is important to share and promote financial justice
Acts	6:1-7	An honest conversation brings resolution
Galatians	1:11-17	A Pharisee is transformed
James	5:1-6	Those who exploit will reap the consequences

11. Leadership Development (Holistic Development)

Exodus	3–4	Leaders are called and empowered
Deuteronomy	4:14	Part of the responsibility of a leader is to teach
Matthew	5:21-48	Leaders are under divine control
Matthew	7:24-27	The importance of solid foundations
Matthew	18:23-35	Leaders forgive as they are forgiven
Luke	4:1-13	Leaders must overcome their own temptations
Luke	10:25-42	Leaders love and serve indiscriminately
Luke	12:1-13	Leaders must not be greedy
Luke	18:15-30	Leaders live generously, frugally, and indiscriminately
1 Corinthians	4:1-4	Accountability is ultimately to the Lord

12. Legalization (Valuing Strangers; Hospitality)

Genesis	12:1-9	Sometimes God orders people to leave their security
Genesis	18:1-15	Sometimes hospitality brings great promise
Genesis	19:1-22	Sometimes hospitality involves serious risks
Exodus	1:15-22	Civil disobedience is sometimes necessary
Exodus	23:1-9	Offer equal justice to all. Don't mistreat foreigners
1 Kings	17:8-16	Our guests may be our unanticipated blessing
Matthew	5:39-44	Circles of responsibility include one's enemies
Matthew	25:31-46	Offering hospitality has transcendent meaning
Luke	14:12-24	Give preferential treatment to the needy
Romans	12:9-21	Welcome strangers into your home
Romans	13:1-7	There is an obligation to legal responsibility
Galatians	6:10	We are called to help all people in need
Ephesians	2:11-22	All Gentiles are "aliens" seeking reconciliation to God
Hebrews	13:2	Our "strangers" may be "angels unawares"
1 Peter	1:17	We live as strangers on earth

13. Micro-Finance (Self-Help, Small Business Development, Micro enterprise, and Job Development)

Exodus	23:12	We are to work diligently six days a week
Exodus	31:1-11	The Holy Spirit first descends on artisans
Proverbs	6:1-5	Be cautious about co-signing for loans
Proverbs	12:10-28	Business people should be kind, controlled, and hardworking
Proverbs	16:1-3	Make your business a co-ownership with God
Nehemiah	4:21	Good work consists of both building and protecting assets
Matthew	4:19	God uses transferable business skills for kingdom building
John	5:14-18	God is active in creation
John	5:17	God is constantly employed. Jesus followed His example
Acts	5:1-11	Misrepresenting business dealings is dishonest
Acts	18:1-3	Paul employs business skills to build relationships
1 Corinthians	9:13-18	Paul does not exploit the gospel, but uses his own resources
Ephesians	2:10	We are God's greatest work project
1 Timothy	6:17-19	Don't trust in wealth. Trust in God
Revelation	20:13	We will be judged according to our "work"

14. Personal Wholeness (Salvation, Evangelism, and Growth)

Luke	1:26-38	Mary hears from God and accepts his will
Luke	3:1-20	The gospel demands repentance
Luke	4:1-13	The Word of God disarms temptation
Luke	8:1-13	Only some will receive the message of God and let it grow
Luke	8:2-21	Christian obedience allows the Word to bring forth results
Luke	10:1-12	Clear goals and transparency open doors
Luke	12:22-34	The Christian places ultimate trust in God
Luke	15:11-32	God waits like a father to forgive
Luke	18:1-14	Prayer requires persistence, humility, and honesty
John	4:1-4	The gospel cuts across cultural and social norms
John	4:1-42	Accepting Christ transforms one's orientation
Acts	2	The Holy Spirit leads community and individuals into wholeness
Acts	16:11-40	Status and role are unimportant to the issue of salvation
Ephesians	4:25-32	God liberates the individual to transform social relations
Colossians	1:15-23	God is the point of coherency in all

15. Physically- and Mentally-Challenged

Genesis	32:22-32	Disability may be a sign of divine encounter
Exodus	4:1-14	God compensates for a speech impediment
2 Samuel	9:1-13	A king reaches out to a cripple
Isaiah	53:1-3	God's servant suffers terribly
Mark	8:22-26	There are gradations of handicap
John	9:1-34	Jesus uses extraordinary and natural means to heal
John	9:35-41	Sometimes "whole" people are less capable
John	9:35-41	It is pointless to find causes to blame
1 Corinthians	12:12-26	The human body and Body of Christ operate similarly
1 Corinthians	13	We are all handicapped without love

2 Corinthians 12:6-10 God's apostle has chronic disability 2 Corinthians 4:7-12 Death is working in us, but life is, too

16. Physiological Care (Housing, Food, and Clothing)

Genesis	1:29-31	God has provided natural bounty for human survival
2 Kings	4:1-7	A poor widow receives help from neighbors, a prophet, and God
Psalm	82	he needy pray for God's attention
Proverbs	15:15-17	Lack of money does not mean impoverishment of soul
Proverbs	17:5-6	The poor deserve respect
Habakkuk	3:17-19	The believer celebrates God in the midst of deprivation
Matthew	8:23-27	God is Lord of the elements
Luke	6:1-5	Gleaning and sharing is important in desperate situations
John	6:1-15	Jesus uses little to feed many
1 Corinthians	4:9-13	God's followers experience deprivation and disdain
2 Corinthians	8:1-15	It is important to share with those in need

Texts for Biblical Studies in Compassionate Ministry Themes

This is a three part compilation in process. This selection of Scriptures is by no means comprehensive nor are all the brief captions intended to definitively describe the essence of the Scriptures. They serve only to facilitate reflection and discussion, hoping to encourage further study as the reader discovers for him/her self how the Scriptures can be applied. Part 1 covers AIDS through Environmental Protection; Part 2, Health Care through Physiological Care; and Part 3, Private Investment and Ownership through Women's Issues. We invite you to add your own scriptural references or reorganize these in ways that best contribute to your biblical dialogue on the subject. Please let us know of any suggestions you have or changes you would recommend. We can be reached at <compassionatelifestyle@nazarene.org>.

17. Private Investment and Ownership

Genesis	1:1-2:3	God created his world step by step
Genesis	12:1-3	To achieve new possibilities may require learning the old
Numbers	13-14	One should focus more on opportunity than opposition
Deuteronomy	22:1-4	One has the right to private property or restoration of such
Nehemiah	2	It is important to have a place where one belongs
Nehemiah	2:11-18	The believer should assess priority and value to goals
Nehemiah	3	The believer should develop and enlist resources
Isaiah	2:1-4	One needs to see the long-range future purpose of God
Isaiah	65:17-25	God envisions peace and productivity
Ezekiel	47:1-12	God envisions long-term productivity
Hosea	2:14-23	God will help reclaim ownership and productivity
Matthew	13:31-32	Jesus describes the strategy of investment and multiplied returns
Luke	9:10-17	God multiplies out of limited available resources

18. Refugees

Genesis	4:1-25	Some refugees are fleeing from their sordid past
Genesis	12:1-3	Some sojourners are directed by God
Genesis	12:10-11	Some travelers move because conditions are not tolerable
Genesis	12:11-20	Itinerants are vulnerable to blackmail and abuse
Genesis	16:1-6	Some refugees are forced to flee because of social causes
Genesis	16:7-14	A refugee cannot flee from God's presence
Genesis	19:1-21	No place is entirely secure
Genesis	28:10	In one's wandering, God's presence can be life changing
Genesis	32:22-30	A refugee can find a place of belonging
Genesis	33:1-16	For those in flight, reconciliation with the past may occur
Genesis	37	Some travelers are fleeing human abuse and death
Genesis	39:1-23	A captive is blackmailed but keeps his integrity
Genesis	41:37-52	The foreigner is exonerated and given great privilege
Numbers	35:1-15	God planned for cities of refuge

2 Samuel	15:14-22	The refugee has to confront new loyalties
Psalm	46:1-5	God ultimately is one's place of refuge
Jeremiah	29:4-7	It is better to invest in the present than long for the past
Daniel	1	A captive makes the best of their situation
Matthew	2:16-18	Jesus himself was a refugee
Philemon		Paul offers refuge to Onesimus

19. Holistic Mission

Deuteronomy	6:5	Love God with heart, soul, and strength
Matthew	22:37	Love God and neighbor as thyself
Matthew	25:31-46	Final judgment is related to service to others
Luke	4:16-22	Jesus comes to minister to the whole person
Luke	24:36-53	Jesus cares for the material needs of his disciples
John	10:10	Jesus offers "abundant" life
Acts	6:1-7	Disciples organize to meet material needs
Romans	12:1-2	God transforms people into entire beings
Ephesians	5:25	Love spouse as Christ loves the Church
1 John	3:16-24	We love each other by truly helping
1 John	5:1	We show love to God by loving his children
1 John	5:2-3	We show love by obeying commandments
1 John	5:13	Faith grants us new eternal life
1 John	5:20	Because of Jesus we have eternal life

20. Woman's Issues

Deuteronomy	21:14-15	Wives have rights that need to be protected
Joshua	2	Even a prostitute is worthy of honor
Judges	4	God gives a woman-leader great success
Ruth	1–4	God's purposes transcend women's tragedy
Proverbs	8	Wisdom is personified as a woman
Proverbs	31	A wife is honored for her management and care
Hosea	3:1-5	Husbandly love can occur even when a wife is unfaithful
Matthew	1:1-16	Abused and alienated women play central saving roles
Matthew	9:18-26	Jesus heals a women in extreme circumstances
Matthew	15:22-28	Jesus finds extraordinary faith in women
Matthew	28:1, 5-10	Jesus reveals himself first to women
Romans	16:1-3, 6, 12	Women are leaders
Galatians	3:23-29	Gender equality is the outcome of Christian faith
Ephesians	5:22-24	Wives have relational responsibilities
1 Timothy	2:9-15	Women, like men, have significant roles

The Wesleyan Alternative Seen Through Cuban Eyes

By Orestes Pombo Portela With translation and editing by Fletcher L. Tink

In my experience in the Church of the Nazarene and my study of John Wesley's writings, I have become increasingly aware that our ignorance about Wesley has not allowed appropriate reflection that would incorporate hopeful opportunities and growth as a holiness denomination. I am not merely speaking of theoretical knowledge, but rather about the incarnational lifestyle as the essence of his message that could help define how we are to think and act as Christ's Church.

Wesley, the father of Methodism, recognized that human beings are "whole people." His emphasis on both inward and outward holiness indicates this. The holy person is empowered to assume human responsibility at the far end of reflection that requires us to "incarnate" practical biblical holiness in tangible "compassionate" ways, consistent with the message of our Master, Jesus Christ.

To better understand the importance of Wesley, it is necessary to describe some of the characteristics of the history of the Church of Cuba. Typically, in many churches, there has been hostility to the role of social or political involvement, understanding that such could be a temptation away from the evangelistic purpose of the Church. The position is based on a dualistic world view that contrasts spiritual and material worlds, believing that Christian experience is limited to the first of these, thereby consigning the material world to its own fate. This ignores the fact that God made both in the same creative gestures and with the same fabric of love.

As for Cuban, our situation entered into further crisis after the 1959 revolution which brought about a Marxist-Leninist orientation that bifurcated Church and society. The society put on the trappings of atheism. Church became relegated to its own internal identity and expressions, concerned only with the needs of its practitioners. The role of Church in society was completely displaced without an agenda for social work, evangelism, or service. It retreated to a position of intra-ecclesiastical functions.

In the 1980's, dramatic changes developed within the government's own position. The government called for ideological self-criticism in what they called "renewal," that included an awareness of the liberation movements in Latin America, liberation theology and a reassessment of the role of religion, rather than seeing it as a relic of the past.

Then, in the 1990's after the fall of the socialist bloc, Cuba lost its economic ties to the former USSR, resulting in major government decisions to counteract this effect of contraction. The economic extremes began to proliferate. Those who found jobs in mixed businesses dependent on foreign capital achieved higher social status than those who continued to work for the government under restricted pay. This caused extreme despair and uncertainty among many in the population.

In the midst of this situation, massive numbers of people began attending church, seeking security in the midst of a changing society. Many saw the collapse of long-term ideologies and values, resulting in personal "emptiness." The churches became places of refuge. Undoubtedly,

the religious openness of the government facilitated this process.

These, however, are not the only reasons for congregational growth. Rather, one has to acknowledge the complexity of the issues that go beyond sociological, psychological rationale that can only be explained as an evidence of God's work in our country that cannot be reduced to mere rationalistic perceptions.

The Church of the Nazarene has not been the exception in seeing pews full. But it is to this group that we center our concern, arguing for the importance of a discipleship which is truly Wesleyan.

Living for a half century under the conditions described earlier where being Christian was stigmatized and where church and state relations were ruptured, this has caused many believers, with good intent and love of Christ, to develop an "allergy" to anything that might sound like "social transformation." This fault fails to understand that essential to the gospel—not as option but as claim—we face the challenges of the present world where sin is visible not only in individual lives but in the structures and systems of society where, too, the battles must be fought.

When we speak of compassionate ministries, we think of activities to assist the needy, certainly important, given the crises that many face. But we also need to "concienticize," or bring to conscience and consciousness, a strategy that attack the causes of these problems. That is the unavoidable Christian commitment to promote social justice and peace. So, then, back to Wesley.

Though Wesley believed in the temporary nature of this present world, it did not lead him to disdain it. He warned repeatedly that the pastor's responsibility was more than the simple verbal proclamation and individual conversion. To him, it was necessary to promote conditions and societal structures in which "holiness" could proliferate, where the new man born in the conversion-regeneration could grow and give first fruit. Christians are called to redeem their time, showing the significance of their redemption within this life. Social action cannot be separated from evangelism, coming at it, not second-hand from Wesley, but first-hand from the Bible itself.

When we talk about the Church's social role, the common Cuban objection is that it is difficult for our churches to fulfill these activities, in part because they are outside of our doctrinal inheritance. Yet we know that we are stewards of the future because Jesus calls us to be salt and light "in the world."

In our particular case, being a "holiness" church, what do we mean when we talk about "entire sanctification"? Isn't this the climax of the inward renovation through God's loving act that necessarily ought to correspond to its outward projection which, in turn, necessarily proclaims the gospel of hope to our neighbor when his or her rights are violated?

We believe that it is imperative to define these rich resources, so that every action and every ministry we represent may be nurtured with the riches of a tradition that can contribute to a

Church which has now entered the third millennium.

In conclusion, we see the balance of Christianity in the tension between Mark 8:16, "What good is it for a person to gain the whole world, yet forfeit their soul?" and its implicit application, "What good is it for a person to save his soul, if it isn't of any service to the world?" Perhaps this is a fundamental issue of the Christian faith.

Wesley wanted to wake up our conscience to the reality that the values of justice and truth are not abstract goals, but are building blocks to life itself. His theology, first and foremost, synthesizes the gospel message of salvation both in human time and society.

Biblical Budgets, General Assembly, and the Poor

What would happen if churches really followed biblical budgeting principles? It could be anarchy. It could be revival.

As I read the Old Testament, the Israelites were commanded to give a tenth part of their produce or income for three reasons.

The first use of the tithe was to celebrate annually the abundance of God's provision, that is, a collective "blow-out" of celebration that praised Him and reviewed His favor (Deut. 14:22-26). Here I think that, for our denomination, the quadrennial General Assembly meets the criterion as an "extravaganza" of blessing. Local churches and district gatherings probably do the same.

A second use was to support the Levites, that is, the pastoral staff that ministered the ordinances to the congregants (Deut. 14:27; Num. 18:21-24). They were to be provided for as work persons worthy of divine hire.

However, ever third year, the celebration tithe was to be redirected to providing for the poor, defined as "orphans, widows and foreigners" (Deut. 14: 28, 29). Oops! Is this tithe one that we gloss over?

Most Christian institutions have compounded the list with building, ministry, mission, and Christian education budgets, each having its own rationale for slicing up the pie.

Yet I wonder if celebration and staffing, minus the tithe to the poor, perhaps tilts the balance to selfishness and self-interest.

On the other hand, if we were more faithful to the "poor" piece, some of the rest of these commitments might strongly be covered in unforeseen ways.

Quotations of Compassion from Christian History

Euripides (480-406 B.C.):

To generous souls, every task is noble.

From Early Church Fathers, dated 2nd Century A.D.:

For Christians cannot be distinguished from the rest of the human race by country or language or customs. They do not live in cities of their own; they do not use a peculiar form of speech; they do not follow an eccentric manner of life Yet, although they live in Greek and barbarian cities alike, as each man's lot has been cast, and follow the customs of the country in clothing and food and other matters of daily living, at the same time they give proof of the remarkable and admittedly extraordinary constitution of their own common wealth. They live in their own countries, but only as aliens. They have a share in everything as citizens, and endure everything as foreigners. Every foreign land is their fatherland, and yet for them every fatherland is a foreign land. They marry, like everyone else, and they beget children, but they do not cast out their offspring. They share their board with each other, but not their marriage bed They busy themselves on earth, but their citizenship is in heaven. They obey the established laws, but in their own lives they go far beyond what the laws require. They love all men, and by all men are persecuted. They are unknown, and still they are condemned; they are put to death, and yet they are brought to life. They are poor and yet they make many rich; they are completely destitute, and yet they enjoy complete abundance. They are dishonored, and in their very dishonor are glorified; they are defamed, and are vindicated. They are reviled, and yet they bless; when they are affronted, they still pay due respect. When they do good, they are punished as evildoers; undergoing punishment, they rejoice because they are brought to life It is to no less a post than this that God has ordered them, and they must not try to evade it.

St John Chrysostom (A.D. 344-407), Silver-Tongued Orator and Preacher:

Charity is the scope of all God's commands.

St Francis of Assisi (1182-1226), Founder of the Franciscan Order:

When there is charity and wisdom, there is neither fear nor ignorance. Where there is patience and humility, there is neither anger nor vexation. Where there is poverty and joy, there is neither greed nor avarice. Where there is peace and meditation, there is neither anxiety nor doubt.

John Bunyan (1628-88), Preacher, Writer, and Author of Pilgrim's Progress:

Professors of faith are great prattlers and talkers and disputers but do little of anything that bespeaks love to the poor or self-denial in outer things. Some people think religion is made up of words, a very wide mistake. Words without deeds is but a half-faced religion: "Pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father is this, to visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep thyself unspotted from the world" (James 1:27). Again, "If a brother or

sister be naked and destitute of daily food, and one of you say unto them, "Depart in peace, be warmed and filled (which are very fine words); notwithstanding ye give them not those things that are needful to the body; what doth it profit?" (James 2:15-16).

Bishop Francis Atterbury (1662-1732), Bishop of Rochester, England:

Should we grieve over a little misplaced charity, when an all knowing, all wise Being showers down every day his benefits on the unthankful and undeserving?

Jonathan Swift (1667-1745), Irish Clergyman and Satirist:

Nothing is so hard for those who abound in riches to conceive how others can be in want.

John Wesley (1703-1791), Founder of the Methodist Church:

I want you to converse more, abundantly more, with the poorest of the people, who, if they have not any taste, have souls, which you may forward in their way to heaven. And they have (many of them) faith and the love of God in a larger measure than any persons I know. Creep in among these in spite of diet and an hundred disgusting circumstances and thus put off the gentlewoman. Do not confine your conversation to genteel and elegant people. I should like this as well as you do; but I cannot discover a precedent for it in the life of our Lord or any of his apostles. My dear friends, let you and I walk as he walked.

General William Booth (1825-1912), Co-founder of the Salvation Army:

I hungered for hell. I pushed to the midst of it in the east end of London. For days I stood in those seething streets, muddy with men and women, drinking it all in and loving it all. Yes! I loved it because of the souls I saw. One night I went home and said to my wife: 'Darling, I have given myself, I have given you and our children to the service of these sick souls.' She smiled and took my hand and we knelt down together. That was the first meeting of the Salvation Army.

Albert Schweitzer (1875-1965), German Theologian and Medical Missionary:

Until he extends his circle of compassion to include all living things, man will not himself find peace.

Howard Thurman (1900-81), Minister, Educator, Civil Rights Leader:

"The Work of Christmas"

When the song of the angels is stilled, When the star in the sky is gone, When the kings and the princes are home, When the shepherds are back with their flocks, The work of Christmas begins: To find the lost,
To heal the broken,
To feed the hungry,
To release the prisoner,
To rebuild the nations,
To bring peace among brothers,
To make music in the heart.

Eric Hoffer (1902-1983), Social Philosopher:

Compassion is the antitoxin of the soul; where there is compassion even the most poisonous impulses remain relatively harmless.

Jean-Paul Sartre (1905-1980), Existential Philosopher:

The poor don't know that their function in life is to exercise our generosity.

Archbishop Derek Worlock (1920-96):

I am my brother's keeper, and he's sleeping pretty rough these days.

John Berger (1926-), Social Novelist:

The poverty of our century is unlike that of any other. It is not, as poverty was before, the result of natural scarcity, but of a set of priorities imposed upon the rest of the world by the rich. Consequently, the modern poor are not pitied but written off as trash. The twentieth-century consumer economy has produced the first culture for which a beggar is a reminder of nothing.

Erwin W. Lutzer, Current Senior Pastor of Moody Bible Institute:

Christianity demands a level of caring that transcends human inclinations.

About Mother Teresa of Calcutta (1910-1997), Founder of Missionaries of Charity:

A young Brother came to Mother Teresa seeking advice. He wanted only one assignment, to work with the lepers. Mother told him that his vocation was not necessarily to work with the lepers. His vocation was to belong to Jesus, and because he belonged to Jesus, he could put his love for Jesus in action by service to the lepers.

"It makes no difference whether you are teaching university-level people, or whether you are in the slums, or just cleaning and washing or scrubbing, washing wounds, picking up maggots, all this makes no difference. Not what we do, but how much love we put into the doing is what concerns Jesus."

A Prayer of Mother Teresa:

Eternal life, Father, is to know You, the one true God, and Jesus Christ, whom You have sent.

May we bring this eternal life to the poor, deprived as they are of all comfort, of material possessions; may they come to know You, love You, possess You, share in Your life, You who are the God and Father of men and of my Lord Jesus Christ, Source of all truth, and goodness and happiness.

General Superintendent Phineas F. Bresee (1838-1915), Co-founder of Los Angeles First Church of the Nazarene, "Mother Church" of the Denomination:

The first miracle after the baptism of the Holy Ghost was wrought upon a beggar. It means that the first service of a Holy Ghost-baptized church is to the poor; that its ministry is to those who are lowest down; that its gifts are for those who need them the most. As the Spirit was upon Jesus to preach the gospel to the poor, so His Spirit is upon His servants for the same purpose.

General Superintendent John W. Goodwin, Church of the Nazarene (1920):

Pure religion always has and always will have its two sides: purity and service. To neglect service in the welfare of others is to demonstrate a lack of purity. Holiness people should be preeminent in social service. This is what chiefly characterized the Early Church—their untiring service to bless their fellowmen and care for their widows and fatherless children.

Organizing Minutes of the Los Angeles First Church of the Nazarene, Oct. 20, 1895:

The field of labor to which we feel especially called is in the neglected quarters of the cities and wherever else may be found waste places and souls seeking pardon and cleansing from sin. This work we aim to do through the agency of city missions, evangelistic services, house-to-house visitation, caring for the poor, and comforting the dying. To this end, we strive personally to walk with God and to incite others so to do.

Old Chinese Poem:

Go to the people,
Live among them,
Learn from them,
Start with what they know.
Build on what they have;
But of the best of leaders,
When their task is accomplished,
Their work is done,
The people all remark
'We have done it ourselves.'

Quotations on "Compassion" as Seen in Assorted Religious Literature

From the Authorized King James Version of the Bible

"If there be among you a poor man of one of thy brethren within any of thy gates in the land... thou shalt not harden thine heart, nor shut thine hand from thy poor brother. But thou shalt open thine hand wide unto him, and shall surely lend him sufficient for his need" (Deut. 15:7-8).

"For the needy shall not always be forgotten: the expectation of the poor shall not perish forever" (Ps. 9:18).

"Happy is he... whose hope is in the Lord his God: Which executeth judgment for the oppressed; which giveth food to the hungry" (Ps. 146:5-7).

"But if a man be just . . . and hath given his bread to the hungry . . . he shall surely live, saith the Lord God" (Ezek. 18:5-9).

"But when thou makest a feast, call the poor, the maimed, the lame, the blind: And thou shall be blessed; for they cannot recompense thee: For thou shalt be recompensed at the resurrection of the just" (Lk. 14:13-14).

"And above all things have fervent charity among yourselves: For charity shall cover the multitude of sins" (1 Pet. 4:8).

From the Jewish Tanakh (includes the Torah, the Prophets, and Writings)

"You shall not subvert the rights of the stranger or the fatherless; you shall not take a widow's garment in pawn. Remember that you were a slave in Egypt and that the LORD your God redeemed you from there" (Deut. 24:17-18).

"Learn to do good. Devote yourselves to justice; aid the wronged. Uphold the rights of the orphan; defend the cause of the widow" (Is. 1:17).

"He who gives to the poor will not be in want, but he who shuts his eyes will be roundly cursed" (Prov. 28:27).

From the Koran

"Righteousness does not consist in whether you face towards the East or the West. The righteous man is he who believes in God and the Last Day, in the angels and the Book and the prophets; who though he loves it dearly, gives away his wealth to kinsfolk, to orphans, to the destitute, to the traveler in need and to beggars, and for the redemption of captives" (The Cow 2:177).

"Whatever alms you give shall rebound to your own advantage, provided that you give them for the love of God. And whatever alms you give shall be paid back to you in full: you shall not be wronged" (The Cow 2:272).

"Each soul is the hostage of its own deeds. Those on the right hand will in their gardens ask the sinners: 'What has brought you into Hell?' They will reply: 'We never prayed nor did we ever feed the destitute. We engaged in vain disputes and denied the Day of Reckoning till the inevitable end overtook us'" (The Cloaked One 74:46-47).

From the Book of Mormon

"But woe unto the rich, who are rich as to the things of the world. For because they are rich, they despise the poor, and they persecute the meek, and their hearts are upon their treasures; wherefore, their treasure is their god. And behold, their treasure shall perish with them also" (2 Nephi 9:30).

"And now, Amulek, because thou hast fed me and taken me in, thou art blessed; and I was an hungered, for I had fasted many days" (Alma 8:26).

"Verily, verily, I say that I would that ye should do alms unto the poor; but take heed that ye do not your alms before men to be seen of them; otherwise ye have no reward of your Father who is in heaven" (3 Nephi 13:1).

From the Hindu Upanishads

"There are three branches of the law. Sacrifice, study, and charity are the first" (Khandogya Upanishad, 2nd Prapathaka, 23rd Khanda: 1).

"Let him never turn away (a stranger) from his house, that is the rule. Therefore a man should by all mean acquire much food, for (good) people say (to the stranger): 'There is food ready for him.' If he gives food amply, food is given to him amply. If he gives food fairly, food is given to him fairly. If he gives food meanly, food is given to him meanly" (Taittiriyake Upanishad, 3rd Valli, 10th Anuvaka: 1).

"The divine voice of thunder repeats the same Da Da, that is, Be subdued, Give, Be merciful. Therefore let that triad be taught, Subduing, Giving, and Mercy" (Brihadaranyaka Upanishad, 5th Adhyaya, 2nd Brahmana: 1-3).

From the Buddhist Dhammapada

"Is there a limit to the variety of garlands skilled hands make from a heap of flowers? Is there a limit to the number of good deeds a man can do once he is born?" (54).

"Do as you would want done to you" (83).

"Fools are not generous: the world of the gods is not for the stingy. Wise men are generous: they find happiness in the next birth" (98).

"The disciples of Gautama are always awake, day and night delighting in compassion and love" (140).

From the Taoist Holy Book, Tao Te Ching:

"Yield and overcome;
Bend and be straight;
Empty and be full;
Wear out and be new;
Have little and gain;
Have much and be confused" (Twenty-Two).

[&]quot;Before receiving, there must be giving" (Thirty-Six).

[&]quot;The sage never tries to store things up. The more he does for other, the more he has. The more he gives to others, the greater his abundance" (Eighty-One).

Dr. Bresee on the Poor, etc.

The Poor

- "The first miracle after the baptism of the Holy Ghost was wrought upon a beggar. It means that the first service of a Holy Ghost-baptized church is to the poor; that its ministry is to those who are lowest down; that its gifts are for those who need them the most. As the Spirit was upon Jesus to preach the gospel to the poor, so His Spirit is upon His servants for the same purpose."
- "We can get along without rich people, but not without preaching the gospel to the poor."
- "We want pastors who will go out and find the poor that nobody else cares for."
- "His heart was to throb in deepest sympathy and love for the poor of the earth."
- "The evidence of the presence of Jesus in our midst is that we bear the gospel, primarily, to the poor. This must be genuine; it is more than sentiment; it cannot be stimulated nor successfully imitated."
- "We are poor—yes, and I trust the Lord will keep us poor. Anybody who can make money and get rich is not fit to be a Pentecostal Nazarene. If a man is worthy of the cause, he will pour his money out."
- "In reference to the poor; the Lord has told us to do good unto all men as we have opportunity, especially to those of the household of faith."
- "That a people are poor and weak and despised is no shadow to dim their hope. If they have God's gift of the Holy Spirit, there is nothing to which He calls but that they may do."
- "Let the poor be fed and clothed; let us pour out our substances for this purposes; but let us keep heaven open, that they may receive the unspeakable gift of His love, in the transforming power of the Holy Ghost."
- "Let the Church of the Nazarene be true to its commission; not great and elegant buildings; but to feed the hungry and clothe the naked, and wipe away the tears of sorrowing, and gather jewels for His diadem."

Politics

• "I have said that there is a political side to the Christian life . . . Righteousness is as deep as hell and as high as heaven. A man's vote or a woman's political influence is for God or against Him, on the great questions which go to the bottom of things."

Missions

• "Our church is preeminently a missionary church. It knows no difference between home and foreign fields—in these days all fields are near."

Christian Service

- "Instead of taking a man out of service and burden bearing for men, the religion of Jesus makes him the servant of all, and as far as possible he bears the burden of all."
- "Greatness in His kingdom is not according to worldly thought. That here, up is down, greatness is service, to be chief is to be slave. That a man cannot be great here until he ceases to have any desire to be great. Great here is a gewgaw, a throne, a bauble."

Essentials

- "For the benefits which come to the individual church, we can afford to sacrifice every prejudice and preconceived notion which is not essential to heaven or holiness."
 - **Dr. Phineas F. Bresee** (1838-1915) is considered by many to be the primary architect of the International Church of the Nazarene. For many years he served as a Methodist minister but, due to his public conviction about the importance of "holiness" and "entire sanctification" to doctrine, was eased out of denominational responsibility. Subsequently, he formed the First Church of the Nazarene in downtown Los Angeles, which became a primary expression of a growing movement of Wesleyan renewal that now encompasses over 12,000 congregations in almost 140 nations.

Quotations from Mother Teresa of Calcutta

"Let us more and more insist on raising funds of love, of kindness, of understanding, of peace. Money will come if we seek first the Kingdom of God—the rest will be given."

"Do not think that love in order to be genuine has to be extraordinary. What we need is to love without getting tired. Be faithful in small things because it is in them that your strength lies."

"If we have no peace, it is because we have forgotten that we belong to each other."

"Our life of poverty is as necessary as the work itself. Only in heaven will we see how much we owe to the poor for helping us to love God better because of them."

"One must really have suffered oneself to help others."

"We cannot do great things. We can only do little things with great love."

"Many people mistake our work for our vocation. Our vocation is the love of Jesus."

"Without our suffering, our work would just be social work, very good and helpful, but it would not be the work of Jesus Christ, not part of the Redemption. All the desolation of the poor people, not only their material poverty, but their spiritual destitution, must be redeemed. And we must share it, for only by being one with them can we redeem them by bringing God into their lives and bringing them to God."

"It doesn't matter who it is, and that will help you to grow up in greater love for each other."

"It is easy to love the people far away. It is not always easy to love those close to us. It is easier to give a cup of rice to relieve hunger than to relieve the loneliness and pain of someone unloved in our own home. Bring love into your home for this is where our love for each other must start."

"Give until it hurts."

"If we really want to love we must learn how to forgive."

"In the developed countries there is a poverty of intimacy of spirit, of loneliness, of lack of love. There is no greater sickness today than that one."

"It is not how much we do, but how much love we put in the doing. It is not how much we give, but how much love we put in the giving."

"The more you have, the more you are occupied, the less you give. But the less you have the more free you are. Poverty for us is a freedom. It is not a mortification, a penance. It is joyful freedom. There is no television here, no this, no that. But we are perfectly happy."

- "The poor give us much more than we give them. They're such strong people, living day to day with no food; and they never curse, never complain. We don't have to give them pity or sympathy. We have so much to learn from them."
- "The world today is hungry not only for bread but hungry for love; hungry to be wanted, to be loved."
- "Let no one ever come to you without leaving better and happier. Be the living expression of God's kindness: kindness in your face, kindness in your eyes, kindness in your smile."
- "I try to give to the poor people for love what the rich could get for money. No, I wouldn't touch a leper for a thousand pounds; yet I willingly cure him for the love of God."
- "Smile at each other, smile at your wife, smile at your husband, smile at your children, smile at each other—it doesn't matter who it is—and that will help you to grow up in greater love for each other."
- "There should be less talk. A preaching point is not a meeting point."
- "If you judge people, you have no time to love them."
- "I do not pray for success. I ask for faithfulness."
- "Let us not be satisfied with just giving money. Money is not enough, money can be got, but they need your hearts to love them. So, spread your love everywhere you go."

From In the Heart of the World

- "In loving one another through our works we bring an increase of grace and a growth in divine love."
- "Each of us is merely a small instrument; all of us, after accomplishing our mission, will disappear."
- "We will never know how much just a simple smile will do."
- "Yesterday is gone. Tomorrow has not yet come. We have only today. Let us begin."
- "Like Jesus, we belong to the whole world, living not for ourselves but for others. The joy of the Lord is our strength."
- "May God give back to you in love all the love you have given and all the joy and peace you have sown around you, all over the world."
- "Seeking the face of God in everything, everyone, everywhere, all the time, and seeing His hand in every happening—that is contemplation in the heart of the world."
- "To me, contemplation is not to be shut up in a dark place but to allow Jesus to live His passion, love, and humility in us, praying with us, being with us, sanctifying through us."
- "Every act of love is a work of peace, no matter how small."
- "There are many people who can do big things, but there are very few people who will do the small things."
- "Love, to be real, must cost—it must hurt—it must empty us of self."

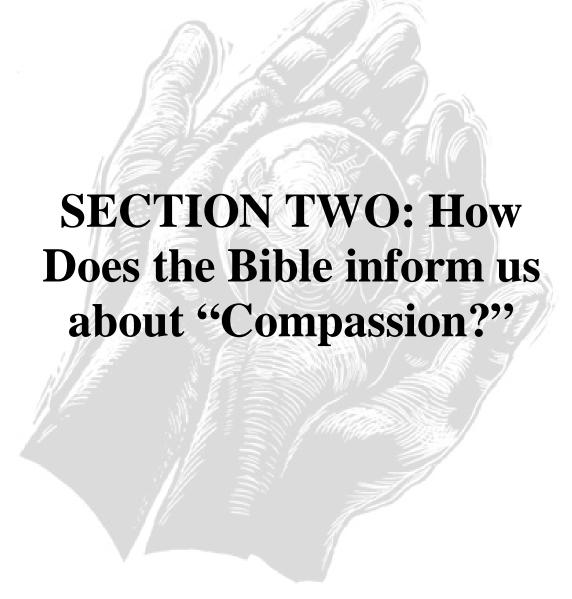
"Suffering is nothing by itself. But suffering shared with the passion of Christ is a wonderful gift, the most beautiful gift, a token of love."

"Would you like to see Jesus?"

[Mother Teresa takes Bishop Curlin around a few walls to a man lying on a black leather pallet who has clearly visible things crawling on his body. As the bishop stands there in shock, Mother Teresa kneels down and wraps her arms around him, holding him like a baby in one's arms.]

"Here he is."
[The bishop asks "Who?"]

"Jesus. Didn't he say you'd 'find me in the least person on earth?' Isn't this Jesus challenging us to reach out and love?"



1 Corinthians 13: A Paraphrase for Those Engaged in Compassionate Ministries

What if I could talk in theological lingo and revel in religious jargon, but did not have compassion for others? My message would be nothing more than a noisy thud or an offensive clatter. What if I could spin all kinds of future scenarios, could expound the sharpest of intellectual arguments, could nail all questions of trivia? What if I could muster up mental powers that would remove all obstacles, but didn't have compassion? I would be a zero, a nada. What if I burnt myself out trying to solve problems of the poor or got zapped in the effort, but did not have a spirit of compassion? It would be a total waste.

Compassion is willing to wait a long time; compassion treats people as they would want to be treated. Compassion is not roused to jealousy, it does not try to outdo others. Compassion doesn't bulldoze over those less fortunate; it doesn't draw attention to itself. It doesn't get riled up, nor does it take note of others' failures. Compassion finds no joy in bad events but is euphoric when good things happen. It always seeks to build walls of protection around the vulnerable, confidence around the insecure, a positive attitude around the discouraged, and resiliency around those have felt repeatedly abandoned.

Compassion is never a lost cause. Oh yes, peering into the future has its definitive limits; speaking piously and powerfully will come inevitably to an end. And all paradigms and theories of human care will be dumped into the garbage bin. These "tricks of the trade" are rather superficial compared to the complete agenda which is yet to be presented. All these will ultimately fade away.

When I was a kid, I prattled like one. I thought in juvenile ways. I reasoned immaturely. When I matured, I dumped these childish characteristics. Likewise, I admit that, in our present historical stage, what we see are confused, limited perceptions of reality and human need, but that one day, these things will become as transparently real as seeing each other's face and the soul behind it. Right now, I don't quite get it. But then I will, completely, even as others will, as they see the real "me" behind my face.

Yes, there are the three pillars that will endure forever: faith, that is, to be convinced about that which is ultimately important in life; hope, that is, to anticipate and work towards its fulfillment; and compassion, that is, to embrace it with love and practical care. But when it is all said and done, compassion is at the very heart of it all.

Offered for discussion by Fletcher L. Tink, Nazarene Compassionate Ministries, International.

Oh Lord, May We Go In Your Bathtub

Recently, at a global consultation on refugees in Izmir, Turkey, the plenary speaker, Zechai Tanyar, offered us these poignant thoughts.

The lady missionary, trying to learn Turkish, led the congregation in prayer. After negotiating through her petition, she concluded, thinking she was saying, "Oh Lord, may we go in your strength." Instead of "küvvetinde," she pronounced, "küvetinde," the Turkish word for "bathtub" rather than that for "strength."

Pastor Tanyar, after suppressing his amusement, began to muse on the altered meaning. Could it be that missionaries really need to be bathed in a bathtub before doing cross-cultural service?

He reflected that most missionaries are Type-A personalities, heaven-bent to get a job done, to win as many converts as possible, especially those from the West who measure success by bottom-line figures. They apply great effort and often wear down in the realities of a nation with 67 million people where less than 2,000 are identified as Christian.

Maybe, he thought, the strength of the Lord comes in the form of a "bathtub."

First, before proceeding to service, there is the need for a total stripping of all pretensions, of all ambition, and of all self-centeredness. We need to stand naked before God, much like the pitiable high priest of Zechariah 3 whose filthy clothes needed to be stripped off before God's clothes could be donned.

Second, the bather needs to totally relax under the warm waters of the tub. Therapy is found in surrendering to the water, which, in turn, rejuvenates, refreshes, and restores the tired muscles, taunt sinews and troubled soul.

Third, the waters cleanse away the grime and grit of life. The soaps salve fragrance back into the flesh.

Fourth, the bathtub allows for the total experience. One dips not just a body part, but the whole into the tub, so that all may experience the full rejuvenation and cleansing.

As I listened to him work the metaphor so carefully, I prayed again that I might bask in the waters of the Holy Spirit as a prelude to the tasks that I am yet called to perform. And I recalled sadly those past tasks done out of an enthusiasm unmediated by the nakedness, the rest, the entire cleansing that God offers.

But Brother Tanyar continued in his soft entrancing imagery.

"We in Turkey are some of the most hospitable people in the world. (I give loud assent to this!) We love to have visitors and to invite them into our homes. For us, it is an honor and a privilege.

"What we have discovered in our hospitality is that our visitors often have the wonderful custom of entering our homes with a gift for the hosts. Many times it is the gift of 'baklava,' our traditional sweet pastry so well known and loved in this part of the world. We receive your baklava with deepest gratitude.

"And so it is with missionaries who come to our culture offering the sweet 'baklava' of the gospel, which we identify as Jesus Christ. No, you are not called to deliver Christianity as a religion, but rather Christ, who always offers his sweetness to us.

"On the other hand, you sometimes come with another tradition that doesn't sit so well with us.

"Our homes are decorated, so cleanly with marble floors often covered with beautiful Turkish rugs or kilms. We take great pride in this décor. Yet, you often come to us in shoes that have picked up the accumulated crud of the street.

"Now we have a custom of placing slippers by our doors, as an invitation for you to remove your shoes and slip into our footwear in order to walk around our homes comfortably and cleanly.

"Yet, what we have seen on occasion, is that, while you bring us the sweet baklava of Jesus, you perhaps come tramping into our homes, insensitive to the offer we give you to remove the constraints of your own cultural and institutional excesses that tromp on our cultural sensitivities.

"Please, dear friends, as we open our hearts and minds to you, we will continue to open up our homes and country to you. We need the baklava of Jesus Christ. But feel free to exchange your shoes for our slippers, so that we can fully embrace you."

As he concluded, I thought that I should head for the bathtub. It would be nice to get those shoes off for a while!

Let Them Die!

I once engaged a Egyptian graduate student in vigorous taxi cab conversation. He yanked off his mask; I removed mine. I pontificated about ministry to the poor. He drilled me on evolution. I was stirred by his honesty but shocked at his outspoken conclusions. In retrospect, I believe that his opinions are shared, in disguise, by intellectuals and the elite worldwide.

Why *should* I care about the poor, the disabled, the lawless, the weak? he wondered aloud. I gave him my litany of Christian rationale. "They're humans! They can be changed! Christ died for them as for me. And, if the privileged don't respond, the masses will rise up to shatter any security they have designed.

He summarily dismissed my theological notions, but responded to my pragmatic final point.

"The problem with you Americans is that you insist in trying to sustain the weak. The facts are that the weak proliferate more kids than the strong so that, over time, you are creating an unnatural balance in the genetic pool by rewarding debility and perpetuating inferiority. Unchecked, you and your kind are inviting your own demise.

"Nature and its evolutionary principles select out the strong to survive, thereby creating higher forms of life. However with this "compassion" thing, you are violating nature and skewing artificially the balance that disposes of inferior life forms.

"Let the weak die; let the poor grovel in their miserable worlds, let the violent kill each other off, let the disabled disappear, let natural fate rule. The only reason you Americans get involved in the rhetoric of "compassion" is that you've got an economic base that allows you both the guilt and the luxury of disposing of a portion of your wealth in charity. My nation and most of the world don't have that luxury."

It was all said so reasonably, articulately and winsomely. He was a nice guy, not a Hitler-type. But, the argument sounded dreadfully familiar.

It reminded me that Christian compassion is revolutionary, alien to secular ears. Were I to follow his paradigm, I would segregate myself from the "inferiors", build my walls of security, fight all initiatives to sustain other peoples and let the rest of the world be damned.

Then I thought of a few of my Christian brothers and sisters who live life so neatly—segregated, secure, sensible and insensitive, in effect, following the script implicit in my Egyptian friend's philosophy. Their Christianity sustains their privilege and hopes that the world's ills will quietly go away.

And then, I asked myself why I believe as I do. I stake my life and lifestyle on these radical conclusions framed by what I understand Christianity to be:

- 1. Because God is father of all, every person is my brother and sister.
- 2. Because all are made in the image of God, every person has value and in some way potentially points me back to God.
- 3. Because God is actively working to redeem his creation, there is hope that the even worst situations and individuals are redeemable.
- 4. Because God is a spirit, He evaluates people by His own spiritual measure, recognizing that this may have little to do with physical, material or economic circumstances.
- 5. Because God has invited us to become collaborators in sharing his grace, our involvement enters us into his program and presence, and our personal life meaning is directly related to our participation.
- 6. Because God reveals himself through Jesus Christ in images of death and resurrection, we understand that weakness, debility, failure, and inferiority are occasions where God's power are best expressed.
- 7. Because God is unchanging, but we are not, human perspectives and judgments are illusory, tentative and deceptive.
- 8. Because God is just and merciful, history is "His-story" that culminates in an afterlife where "meekness," "mourning," and "poor in spirit" (the Beatitudes) will be finally exonerated.

Given the casual, calculating, cold critique of my Egyptian friend, I was unsure whether his philosophy was a veneer for raw selfishness, or a sad accommodation to a miserable world that sees little hope. But, in his appeal to "let them die," I heard the death rattle of hope within his own life.

In contrast, my holy mentor says: "he who saves his life, shall lose it; but he who loses his life for my sake, will find it (Matt. 16:25). Frankly speaking, now there's a form of evolution I find most engaging!

Love in Three Ventricles

Stupid Joke Time: "A man with a receding hair line is a 'thinker.' A man balding on the pate of his head is a 'lover.' A man balding in both places simultaneously 'thinks he is a lover."

I'm at the stage that, while balding all over, I ask myself what it means for Christians to "love."

The word itself has been nibbled down by secular society by those who apply it casually to everything from a Zha Zha Gabor milky "I love you, dahling," to "I luv cookies" (maybe we ought to create a new word "luv" for inferior definitions of "love"), to the ugly devouring of the word as crude sexual act. Sadly, even in Christianity, "love" has been diminished and deconstructed until even the world is suspicious by our use of it.

It was Os Guinness in one of his early works who helped me reconstruct "love." Admittedly, there is much material out there defining the Greek language's rich variety of terms for love, including *agape* love, the spontaneous self-giving, disinterested love that emits from the nature of God himself. I understand somewhat what these terms mean. But it was Guinness who put character and content to "Godly love."

He says that there are three components to love. They are: true understanding, outrage, and identification.

True Understanding: "Jesus did not trust himself to them because he knew all men and needed no one to bear witness of man; for he himself knew what was in man" (John. 2:24-25). He (along with perhaps dogs and children) understood human nature—that is, in theological jargon, "anthropology"—and so could realistically deal with people on their own terms.

Our modern humanistic world vacillates between two wrong anthropologies. According to one, we are indoctrinated that humans are basically good and that if something goes wrong, either the institutions around have corrupted the process or ignorance has set in because the institutions that should have informed or corrected have failed in their duty. This position Guinness calls "naiveté" and the world is intoxicated by this view. Ironically, it seems to me that the U.S. political parties have similarly been seduced. The one party fears the corrupting influence of institutions, especially the government. The other wishes to engage institutions and government to correct the "learning curve deficiency." Yet both assume the inherent "good" nature of humans, to pick themselves up by their bootstraps, or to flower where fertilized.

Sadly, a lot of idealists in the practice of life eventually slide into the second alternative, "cynicism," where everybody is corrupt except, perhaps, "me": distrust is rampant and anybody who has different thoughts or ways of acting is evil. How often I have seen the idealism of young teachers and social workers dissipate under the realities of the profession until the professional opts out "to make some real money" or joins the bureaucracy to avoid hands-on involvement.

But Jesus' alternative saw humans as they really were, made in the holy image of God, morally marred in Eden and carrying the legacy of their own corruption. But the image is not entirely

transfixed by evil. It can be restored, purified, made new by the restorative powers of the cross and resurrection. The most evil of human beings can discover grace and become a saint. The most religious of people can ignore grace and slip into hell. This knowledge, known as the "realistic" perspective, gives hope where humanism burns out and gives caution where human adulation stretches too far.

John Wesley is quoted as saying that a Christian has "poise" with all people. I think that one finds no surprises in human nature. Each person is distinct. Each person is neither worm nor God but find his or her wholeness to the degree that he or she accepts or fends off grace. Love therefore starts with a correct view of human nature.

<u>Outrage:</u> Perhaps this is the most misunderstood and ignored part of Guinness' trilogy. Christians are called to be angry. Yes, not angry for self-serving causes, but outraged at the same things that distress God himself—at the abuse and neglect of those less privileged than ourselves, at unjust and oppressive systems that set up calamity for millions of people before they ever get started in life.

God has bestowed on us the emotion of anger, so that it could be used under appropriate disciplined circumstances. We are angry at Satan who took the beautiful world that God had made and subverted it into death, disease, and despair. We are angry at those who voluntarily choose to be agents of the same, those intent on exploiting the minds and hearts of gullible, impressionable children to divert them into the horrors of life. We are angry at war, at drug trafficking, at media influence, at corporate evil, at self-serving politicians, and at those who abuse power. Yet we know that they themselves are victims of the great deceiver, Satan, who has ensnared them under his spell. We are also angry at a listless gospel and a casual church that holds in its hand the pearl of great price with power and commission to liberate the world, but we have exchanged it for the trinkets of comfort, accommodation, and convenience.

When Jesus stood before the tomb of Lazarus, he anguished not out of sentimentality, but out of anger that the world he had created had been so subverted that grief and death seemed to be its end result. When he whipped out the moneychangers in the temple, he was furious that the existing "church" had conveniently created marketing hoops through which penitent seekers necessarily had to jump to find salvation.

We need a "divine love" that has a component of outrage to it to ensure that we follow through on our insights.

<u>Identification:</u> God made the greatest cross-cultural leap of history to identify with humans. The spotlessness of heaven was exchanged for the grubbiness of earth. Love demanded an inside operation rather than an outside rescue. He puts on his garb of servant, takes on human nature, walks in our streets, shares our pain, and dies in our place. That is identification to the nth degree.

It is identification that protects us from rash behavior. Moses, for instance, had good insight into the nature of the murdered Egyptian who killed the Israelite. His subsequent anger exploded in a

gesture to right the wrong. But, his act was counter-productive, resulting in harsher treatment of the Israelites.

It was not until he returned after a forty year "time-out" in the desert that he identified with the children of Israel rather than with Pharaoh's court, securing the legitimacy to lead God's people to freedom. As he suffered with them, his message took on vibrant credibility.

This kind of love has character, has continuity, and has creativity. It is holistic. It captures our mind, impassions our heart, and instigates our feet into action and involvement. It is a love not only modeled by God himself—"love divine, all loves excelling, joy of heaven to earth come down"—it is a love imparted to us by the operations of the Holy Spirit into our very natures—"fix in us thy humble dwelling."

William Barclay, the Scottish Presbyterian Bible commentator, lamented that all the confessions and creeds, even while talking about the sovereignty, the omniscience, omnipotence of God, failed to identify as central the love of God. It was the Wesleys of the 18th century that recast the gospel, identifying the "central rotunda" of God's being as "love." Love is the essence of his nature out of which all the other attributes are halls of access that spike outward.

Hence, as Wesleyans, we have optimal opportunity and obligation to discover God's heart of love in its ventricular components—true understanding, outrage, and identification to a hurting world that desperately needs all three.

From Census Taking to Name Affirming

Not long ago, I was a census-taker for a month. I wanted to explore my community and get the inside scoop on government intrusion. I was pretty good at it. Made over \$1,300.

The short forms were easy—six questions that tallied numbers, ages and ethnic backgrounds, five minutes worth. But one out of six addresses, selected by random sampling, was cursed with the long form, sixty or so questions for the interviewee and thirty plus for each of the rest of the household. It was tedious, at times difficult and, for some people, offensive. Always, it consumed at least half an hour.

But now we celebrate its results. The United States underestimated its populace by more than five million people and now has 281,000,000. (How could the IRS in its omniscience fail to assess these people?) Over the next few months, the racial and ethnic numbers will be broken out for us, along with a thousand other details in a dribble that attempts to give us a composite picture of who America is.

Censuses are nothing new. David administered one and it got him into a heap of trouble. I Chronicles 21:1 warns: "Satan rose up against Israel and incited David to take a census of Israel." Ironically, David was given his own three boxes to check off, and the result was a plague and 70,000 men dead, a staggering loss to his totals.

I've long tried to figure out what is so perilous about a census. Everybody's doing it. Even the church, your church, does it with gusto.

I admit, census taking is necessary. There is even a Biblical book titled <u>Numbers</u> and God does number the hairs of our head. Necessary, yes. Death-dealing, maybe!

Why was God so angry with David? Commentators speculate on two possible reasons: the militarizing of the populace and the imposition of outrageous taxes. Blame Solomon for the first, his "corvee", that is, forced labor for the building of the temple or service in the military propelled Israel down that slippery slope from the high ground of God as protector to the grave of building one's own kingdom or arming oneself for defense.

Blame Rehoboam for the second. Once you number the people, then the numbers themselves lead governments astray into abuse, squeezing from their constituency financial gain. Sadly, David's census led to enslavement on all the above accounts.

But I believe the peril is deeper than this—the human tendency to scan numbers rather than faces. Our emotional well-being rises and falls on statistical input. If the curve is up, we are elated. If the curve turns south, we get depressed. If inferior growth to that of our competitor or colleague occurs, then we manipulate the numbers, or feel insufficient ourselves. Our bottom line is crunched into either profit or loss, rendering final judgment on personal value.

But let's peel back one layer deeper. Perhaps the peril is in the way we pose the questions. The census designer determines what is of supreme importance to know about a person. How much

does he make? How many toilets are in her house? To what extent is she disabled? Perhaps the questionnaire says more about the values of those who compose the census than it does the people queried.

By creating categories, people are diminished into manageable slots. In colloquial language, we are adept at doing this. People are "<u>illegals</u>," "homeless", "gays", "blind", "illegitimate", "welfare mothers", "soccer moms," "feminizes" "macho-types", and on and on. It allows us to pigeonhole each person and program our thinking into neat and negative stereotypes. Our need to create categories requires pre-judgment, and pre-judgment is mother to prejudice. Are not people more expansive, more complex, more human in God's sight, than the labels we pin on them?

And what about the people who don't fit into our categorizations at all? Our need to create categories leaves vast numbers of people out. And when they don't fit in, in essence, we "liquidate" them with the efficiency with which we liquidate bank accounts.

My fear about my own church is that, in the euphoria of statistical growth, we set ourselves up for its shadowy side. Or we create categories designed to comfort us and, in so doing, annihilate the very people to whom God has called us to minister. Again, I reiterate that census taking is necessary. But beware its danger!

If census taking is not the ultimate arbiter of value, then what is?

The story of Gideon suggests an alternative. In Judges 6, the Midianites are securing the Israelites under siege. An angel of the Lord intervenes and is sent to Gideon to bestow on him the mantle of leadership. He protests vigorously that he is from the "wimpish" tribe of Manasseh and that he, in turn, is "Superwimp". He confirms this by the gesture of "threshing wheat in the wine press", an extraordinary act of cowardice and ineptitude, equivalent to hunting birds in the basement. The confused angel communicates the most outrageous message: "The Lord is with you, Mighty Warrior" perhaps thinking that he had landed at the wrong address.

Pitiable Gideon protests loud and long at the name God has newly bestowed on him. He doesn't recognize "Mighty Warrior" in himself, first offering his hapless resume, then insisting that God prove his calling by exceptional means. Only slowly, does his new designation possess him and his ministry. God has sloughed off all of his ugly stereotypes to reveal his true identity.

Then, I began to realize that God has a habit of re-naming people as a rite of passage into new life. Sarai was re-named Sarah ("Princess"); Abram, Abraham ("Father of Many"); Saul, Paul (his cosmopolitan name); Simon, Peter, the "Rock", and, most amazingly, Jacob, the "deceiver", is given the name of God's beloved people-nation, Israel, "he struggles with God". Then I remember that John, the Elder, talks about a new name written down on the stone, yet to be revealed (Rev. 2:17). John Bunyan, 17th century writer, understood this well in his parabolic <u>Pilgrim's Progress</u>, with his characters named Christian, Evangelist, Faithful, and Hope, all personifications of their names.

As Christians, all bearers of the name of Jesus, we have three tasks. First, we need to discover our own names, graciously given to us by God and do so prayerfully, honestly, relentlessly. Second, we must strip away the hellish labels superimposed by societies that curse so many. Then we must so integrate our lives in theirs that we see each person as Jesus sees them, in their unique varieties and idiosyncrasies, each as a precious child of God for whom He died. Collectively, we help them discover God's name, God's identity and God's mission for them.

Let's ratchet this thought up a dimension. Churches, too, have names. Some are geographic. Some are chronological, such as First Church; or theological, such as "Grace" or "Faith" Churches. Some are named after patrons or heroes. Yet it is the joint task of its members to uncover the real identity of the Church—be it "Community" or "Liberation" Church that contours its God-given role within the neighborhood. Over time and in prayer, God can reveal even that.

The good news is that God has revealed to us not only His name, but ours also if we really want to know. That's sure beats piling up the numbers!

The "Job of" Compassion

One of my heroes in the Bible may not have even been Jewish, nor even a resident in Israel. He was dirt wealthy, earning much as a rancher. And he had three dazzling daughters.

But he was a compassionate man. And when times were excruciatingly tough, his memory of personal generosity helped hold him together.

His compassion is three-sided---relief, advocacy and confrontation. His testimony shows all three:

"When poor people or orphans cried out for help, I came to their rescue.

And I was highly praised for my generosity to widows and others in poverty.

Kindness and justice were my coat and hat;

I was good to the blind and to the lame.

I was father to the needy, and I defended them in court, even if they were strangers.

When criminals attacked, I broke their teeth and set their victims free."

Elsewhere he says:

"I have never cheated widows or others in need,

And I have always shared my food with orphans.

Since the time I was young, I have cared for orphans and helped widows.

I provided clothes for the poor, and I was praised for supplying woolen garments to keep them warm"

Then came the time that he needed gestures of compassion.

Who is he?

JOB

Passages taken from the Contemporary English Version of the *Word in Life Bible*, Job 29:12-17; 31:18-20

Right On!

For years I lived with the misconception that, in order to serve God, I would have to surrender everything. God, being chintzy, would hoard my blessings for the future life, while I lived a life of self-deprivation and sacrifice.

Perhaps it was appropriate at that stage, when I had nothing, and precious little future promise, to feel that way. At least I was malleable!

My adult paths took me through Peace Corps, inner city ministry, and missionary service before the light bulbs flashed! And I uncovered my new orientation in 1 Corinthians 9 where Paul struggles with the issues of personal "rights," what gets surrendered, when, and why. Until we get this one right our attitude towards personal rights is completely wacky.

He asks himself in verse 1: "Am I not free?" Implicit is his right to personal liberty. Conversion does not snuff it out. By asking this question rhetorically, he implies that the answer is a bold "yes."

The rest of the chapter follows the same line of thinking. "Am I not an apostle?" Of course, "yes," I have the right to status and religious respect. "Don't we have the right to food and drink" (4)? Yes, we have the right to fulfill our physiological needs? "Don't we have the right to take a believing wife along with us" (5)? Yes, we have the right to companionship, to marital fulfillment. "Or is it only I and Barnabas who must work for a living" (6)? Yes, we have a right to leisure.

"If others have this right of support from you, shouldn't we have it all the more" (12)? Yes, I have a right to adequate compensation for my services. "I make myself a slave to everyone" (19). Yes, I have the right to social status and to personal liberty. "To the Jews I became like a Jew" (20). Yes, I have the right to my ethnic, racial, religious, and denominational identity. "To those under the law I became like one under the law" (20). Yes, I have the right to live by grace, unbound by antiquated legalisms. "To those not having the law I became like one not having the law" (21). Yes, I have the right to walk in a world of black and white but choose to walk in the grays when necessary.

"To the weak I became weak to win the weak" (22). Yes, I have the right to pull rank, to show strength, to exhibit power but choose not to under certain conditions.

Lots of other rights are implicit in his discussion—the right to privacy, to possessions, to security, or, in Abraham Maslow's hierarchy of needs, love, affection and belongingness, and esteem and self-actualization—that is, being involved in a cause outside of one's own skin.

Paul acknowledges that in God's economy these are indeed real needs built into the fabric of our being that cry out for the right of fulfillment.

But he introduces us to a superior right. He never suggests that we surrender these rights once and for all but rather that there is a supreme right, unique to the Christian, based on the new paradigm of purpose he has discovered. Repeatedly he says that "we did not use this right" (12),

or "I have not used any of these rights" (15), not because God is depriving him, but because he conscientiously has suspended one or several of these rights for a limited period of time in a specific context when they get in the way of his consummate purpose, "to win as many as possible" (19) to the cause of Christ.

In other words, if a right becomes an obstacle to the integrity of the gospel in terms of the perception of the target audience that can be motivated towards Christ, Paul will lay that right aside until either the mission is accomplished or the opportunity has been closed.

Adopting Paul's perspective, it is entirely appropriate for us to pursue all necessary and reasonable rights built into our human needs. However, as God calls us to minister to specific people around us and across the world, we need to put ourselves into others' moccasins to understand sensitively what gets in the way of clear communication of the gospel. If our lifestyle, titles, habits, political perceptions, and denominational affiliation become obstacles, we temporarily lay them aside until the mission is accomplished or rejected.

Our ultimate "right" is our power to set aside lesser rights, in other words, become all things to all people, so that by all possible means we can save some (22).

One further note: a Portuguese professor of mine exploded in class one day in a diatribe against the American Bill of Rights. "Your constitution is a lie, he said, and your whole society is neurotic because of it!" The class woke up with a start!

"It say that every American has the right to 'the pursuit of happiness' and that's a lie! Don't you realize that one does not pursue happiness, that it is not a government-mandated right. Think of the horrors perpetuated in this society on that theme—child abuse, divorce, injustice and the piling up of materialism with no end—all in the elusive search for a happiness that becomes more evasive the harder one tries."

Since then, I've been meekly asking myself, What prompts happiness, if not the constitution or government mandate? In Christian terms, it is dying to self and living for Jesus. It can be in service. It can be in suffering. Paul, I believe, found its secret: "I do all this for the sake of the gospel, that I may share in its blessings" (23). And, at the end of the day, the rights that Paul suspended introduced a gospel to the Western world that opened successive generations and millions to the accessibility of rights that even permits us this discussion. Thank you, Paul! You were "right on!"

Biblical Basics on Justice

The following is a Bread for the World informational pamphlet addressing biblical justice. Bulk copies may be ordered from Bread for the World Publication (address follows).

In every age Christians ponder their mission in the world. Is a passionate concern for justice part of being a follower of Jesus? Or is seeking justice something Christians may choose to do or not do?

When we examine the scriptures, we find out how central justice is to the life of the Christian. There is no concept in the Old Testament with so central a significance for all relationships of human life as that of justice. The people of the Old Testament were in relationship with God because of the covenant that existed between God and Israel.

As a member of this covenant community, each person was in relationship with every other person, including poor and needy people, one's family, and even strangers and aliens. Out of these relationships arose responsibilities and demands. The just person was faithful to these responsibilities and demands.

God's Ownership, Our Stewardship

God created the world and all that is in it. Therefore God is the owner of everything in creation. The earth is the Lord's and all that is in it, the world, and those who live in it (Psalm 24:1). God invites human beings to be stewards of what belongs to God. Stewardship is not a way of managing our possessions. It means rather that we care for what God has entrusted to us.

Let My People Go! The Cry of Yahweh

The justice of God is vividly portrayed in God's concern for the Israelite people when they were in Egypt. In the hold of bondage and slavery, they cried out to God, Yahweh, for help (Exodus 2:23-25). Yahweh called Moses to deliver the Israelite people from slavery:

Then the Lord said: I have observed the misery of my people who are in Egypt; I have heard their cry on account of their taskmasters. Indeed, I know their sufferings, and have come down to deliver them from the Egyptians (Exodus 3:7-8).

The Exodus is the fundamental experience for the Jewish people. Every year the community of Israel gathers to celebrate and relive the Exodus. They are to remember that their God frees them from oppression and injustice. If they are to be faithful to God, they must free the oppressed and do justice toward others.

Yahweh: Defender of the Oppressed

In the legal tradition of the Old Testament, we find the theme of concern for the oppressed and the poor of society: The resident aliens, the orphans, and the widows in your towns, may come and eat their fill so that the Lord your God may bless you in all the work that you undertake (Deuteronomy 14:28-29).

Concern for the oppressed and the poor was at the core of the Israelites' calling. This concern was rooted not only in the covenant, but more importantly, in the very nature of

Yahweh. Yahweh is the defender of the oppressed, the One who liberates the captives, the One who feeds hungry people: (The Lord) executes justice for the oppressed; ... gives food to the hungry. The Lord sets the prisoners free; the Lord opens the eyes of the blind (Psalm 146:7-8).

Share Your Bread with the Hungry: The Message of the Prophets

Throughout Israel's history, the prophets reminded Israel to remain faithful to the covenant. Their primary mission was to lead the people back to the path of righteousness and justice. The prophets were sent not only to speak Yahweh's word, but also to speak on behalf of those who had no voice.

Yahweh complained through the prophets that the people had forgotten who it was that gave them their land and provisions. They, who once were hungry and oppressed, refused to feed the hungry and themselves became the oppressors. The people of Israel spoke folly and left the craving of the hungry unsatisfied (Isaiah 32:6, paraphrased).

Amos was one of the strongest in calling the people back to the way of justice. Israel was at the height of her economic and political power when Yahweh sent the poor shepherd Amos to call the people of Israel to repentance.

These people had often transgressed against the covenant. One transgression was that they oppressed the poor and robbed them of their grain (Amos 5:11a, TEV). The injustice that the rich engaged in completely negated the value of their worship:

I hate, I despise your festivals, and I take no delight in your solemn assemblies. Even though you offer me your burnt offerings and grain offerings, I will not accept them; and the offerings of well-being of your fatted animals I will not look upon. Take away from me the noise of your songs; I will not listen to the melody of your harps. But let justice roll down like waters, and righteousness like an ever flowing stream (Amos 5:21-21). Where there is not justice, life is barren and worship of God is sham.

Shalom: The Vision of Peace

But where will justice lead us? What is the goal toward which the prophets call the people of Yahweh? In doing justice, we came to know God better: Did not you father eat and drink and do justice and righteousness? Then it was well with him. He judged the cause of the poor and needy; then it was well. Is not this to know me? Says the Lord (Jeremiah 22:15b-16).

In addition to knowing God better, doing justice leads to shalom, peace: Ten justice will dwell in the wilderness, and righteousness abide in the fruitful field. The effect of righteousness will be peace, and the result of righteousness, quietness and trust forever (Isaiah 32:16-17).

Where there is justice there is the possibility of peace. The opposite is also true: where there is oppression and injustice there can be no shalom.

What is this shalom God is calling us to experience? It is certainly more than the absence of war and violence. The basic meaning of shalom is wholeness. It involves all the conditions of life that make for wholeness and harmony. Shalom is the goal of God's work as deliverer and

liberator. God's purpose in the world is to restore shalom, and the task of the community of faith is to do God's will.

Prepare the Way of the Lord

When we turn to the New Testament, we find these same themes. John the Baptist, who prepared the way for Christ's public ministry, exhorted his hearers to change their lives. When the crowd asked him what to do, John replied in clear and certain terms: Whoever has two coats must share with anyone who has none; and whoever has food must do likewise (Luke 3:11).

The Work of Justice and Peace: Jesus' Ministry

Jesus characterized his own earthly ministry by service to the poor, the outcasts, and the downtrodden. Early in his public ministry, Jesus entered the synagogue and read from the prophet Isaiah to describe his ministry: The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to bring good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to let the oppressed go free, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor (Luke 4:18-19).

Luke presented us with Jesus at the beginning of his public ministry. Jesus identified himself with the Servant of the Lord and saw himself as part of the great prophetic tradition of Isaiah, Jeremiah, Hosea, and Amos.

Jesus announced the coming of God's reign. But not only did he announce its coming in the power of the Holy Spirit, he also embodied God's reign. In his life, in what he said, and in his deeds, we see what God's reign is all about. In his death and resurrection, God' reign is inaugurated in a new and definitive way.

With Jesus, we have the fullness of shalom, of justice and peace. Jesus is our path to justice and peace. In him, we know and have the justice and peace of God. In Jesus, Yahweh's covenant has been renewed, and we are called to be agents of God's shalom in the world.

Paul reminds us that Jesus, though he was rich ... for your sakes ... became poor, so that by his poverty you might become rich (2 Corinthians 8:9).

Christ Among Us

Jesus is the Poor One among us. He identified himself with poor and hungry people and those who suffer and are in need of help. Christians thus come face to face with a great mystery. God in Christ is present in a special way in poor and hungry people (Matthew 25:31-46). Christ represents himself to us in a special way in the hungry, the naked, the sick, and the prisoner. He is among us in the outcasts and the oppressed of our age. Their cry for justice is Christ's cry for justice.

One of the distinguishing characteristics of the new Christian community was care for those in need. Following the example of their Lord, the early church found ways to care for poor and hungry people, the needy in their midst.

The Bible does not offer us a ten-point program or a five-year plan of action on how to combat injustice in our world. Rather, the scriptures give us a vision of a new creation. The will hunger no more, and thirst no more . . . and God will wipe away every tear from their eyes (Revelation 7:16a-17b).

All biblical quotes are from the New Revised Standard Version unless otherwise noted.

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Web site: www.bread.org

Who's Laughing Now?

I confess to plagiarism. As someone once said: "Either you're a plagiarist of a bore!" I shun boredom and so have chosen the alternative. Frankly, I am devoid of new ideas. Any thoughts I have are the mere distillation or extension of ideas lifted from others.

For example, I heard portions of a sermon recently that belabored the birth of Isaac, that "Kodak" moment, when infertile Sarah and her century-old husband giggled in embarrassment and joy at their late delivery. Isaac was named, "he laughs." And we all follow suit with our guffaws. God promised. God delivered I the nick of time.

But Sarah had jumped the gun, and had stood proxy for God, in surrendering her handmaid to be progenitor of her child. Abraham slept with Hagar. Ishmael was born, then ostracized and banished. And the rest is messy history with blood lines and bloodbaths up to the present.

The point that the preacher effectively made was that Sarah had been given it all—wealth and womb. Ishmael, 14 years old, joyfully jostled infant Isaac around in the courtyard oblivious to the spirit of jealousy germinating in one mother. She had created the problem, and the gnawing presence of her blunder constantly ate away at her. I repeat, she had it all! Sadly, the blessings divinely bestowed on her, in her conniving mind could not be shared or replicated to those of inferior social stature.

We were reminded that we own nothing, control nothing, but that we are merely stewards, receptacles of God's goodness, commissioned to pass our inordinate blessings generously on to others. Yet Sarah couldn't muster up grace in the green glint of jealousy, or in the tilting of social scales.

I fear for the wealthy of the world, notwithstanding myself. Where we have been bountifully bestowed by productivity and prowess, we get all bent out of shape when others clamor for their inheritance, or to aspire to our lifestyles. Then suddenly, grace dissipates into legalism and we, like Sarah, chop away our perceived offenders. We banish them to their worlds of limited resources and chaotic settings, seeking to protect ourselves, alone. Thankfully, in the misery of banishment, Hagar and Ishmael encountered a merciful angel, that Sarah was surely not.

Compassion somehow has to stretch around those that challenge us, that threaten us, that yearn for the same ends we casually enjoy. To do less, plays the Sarah game, and risks the tragedies that she spiraled into motion.

How I wish I knew how to apply this principle in the midst of the awesome political realities that rile our world! How do I live as a Christian distinct from Sarah? The choice, I suspect, won't be a laughing matter.

Thank you, preacher. I'll get your name later.

Beauty and St. Bezalel

I playfully ask my students where, in the Bible, do we have the record of the first instance of when the Holy Spirit came and filled someone?

Rarely, do they name it!

However, being a most educated readership, you know that Exodus 31:1 is my target passage: "Then the Lord said to Moses, 'See, I have chosen Bezalel son Uri, the son of Hur, of the tribe of Judah, and I have filled him with the Spirit of God, with skill, ability and knowledge in all kinds of crafts---to make artistic designs for work in gold, silver and bronze . . . and to engage in all kinds of craftsmanship . . "

Duh! It's not the religious professionals that get anointed on this first occasion, but the artisans, the sculptors, carpenters, jewelry smiths, and clothes designers, especially when these art forms are intended to glorify Him. Let's have a beatification for Bezalel and make him patron saint of beauty.

In other words, God loves beauty, creativity and ennobling art. Indeed, He exhibits it everywhere.

What does this have to do with compassion and the poor and needy?

Sadly, in the world of economic blight and human tragedy, it is easy to imagine that food on the table and a blanket on the bed take higher priority over the aesthetics of life. But I believe that this perspective diminishes the importance of the nurturance of the soul that can also be fed with beauty, elegance, and color. Music, art, architecture, indeed, the whole world of artistic creativity, can instill meaning and transcendency, long after the food is consumed. Poverty is doubly impoverished when set in ugliness.

In our Western pragmatism, let us not reduce people to mere physiological services. To offer them also elegance and beauty, and the opportunity to create the same, is to encourage them to be enfolded into the Spirit of God himself.

Christians Care for Creation

By Laurie Braaten and Jon Twining

Why do Christians care for creation?

Many Christians are concerned about maintaining fresh water resources, clean air, and beautiful outdoors. Many never connect that concern or awareness to their faith. But caring for the creation isn't just good for our world and for us; caring for creation is part of loving God with or heart, our soul, our mind, and our strength.

The Church of the Nazarene will be discussing our theology of creation and what our response as a denomination should be at the next General Assembly. The next three paragraphs are a possible basis for that discussion.

We begin with who God is . . .

- We believe that the earth belongs to God, who is its Creator (Deut. 10:14, Ps. 24:1).
- God maintains an active, sustaining presence in his creation (Heb. 1:3).
- God is pleased with his creation (Gen. 1:31) and he demonstrates love and compassion toward all he has made (Ps. 145:9, 13, 17).
- We observe that creation was declared good before the creation of humans (Gen. 1:21, 25), and therefore it has value for its own sake.
- · Nature is a witness to the power and glory of God (Ps. 19, 104, 148); viewing God's handiwork leads us to worship the Creator (Rom. 1:20).
 - Then we ask, "How did Christ respond?"
- We believe that sin results in the destruction of creation (Hos. 4:1-3); therefore, the ultimate solution to the "ecological crisis" can be found in Jesus Christ and His Church.
- · Christ's death on the cross was necessary to reconcile all of creation to God (Col. 1:20), and creation will be completely restored when Christ's kingdom is established (Rom. 8:23, Rev. 21:1).
- Because God thinks creation is worth saving, we recognize that our work on earth must include redeeming creation from the effects of sin and preserving it as much as possible for the glory of the Creator.

The Holy Spirit guides our responses . . .

The Church of the Nazarene affirms that God gave human beings the responsibility of stewardship over His creation. God placed humans in the garden to nurture and care for it, not to dominate and destroy it (Gen. 2:15).

We find in creation what we need to supply our "daily bread." God has given all of us enough to meet our current and future needs if we wisely use the gifts of creation. This includes limiting our expansion and growth, not treating resources as inexhaustible, and not taking more than we need when others are still lacking the basics of life. It also includes loving our current and future neighbors as ourselves (Matt. 22:39) by not polluting our common resources: the land, water, and air.

So what does this mean for us?

- 1. We begin by sharing information and education with our friends, our families, and ourselves. We bring it to the front of our minds and become aware of our influences.
- 2. We remember this is not a political issue! It is discussed in politics, but it is primarily about how we can respond and relate to God as his servants.
- 3. This is an economic decision. Living more simply reduces the stress we place on the earth and the demands we make on its resources. We can save money by making ecological decisions to turn off lights after their use, turn down the heater a couple of degrees, and utilize fuel-efficient vehicles and carpooling.
- 4. Reducing energy use helps save money. However, there are some ecological decisions that cost us financially but are efficient long-term. Buy fruits and vegetables raised locally and in season. Spend a little extra money to buy something that will last a long time and/or can be reused.
- 5. Reuse items whenever you can. For example, use canvas bags to bring home your groceries. Ask everyone to bring their own table service to the next picnic instead of using Styrofoam cups and plastic silverware.
- 6. Recycle paper, aluminum, glass, and plastic. If your community doesn't offer these programs, find out how your church could facilitate these activities.

Why is it important for the church to address this issue and why now?

A revised statement on creation is needed because of a tendency in conservative denominations to focus on the processes of cosmological origins (the "how" questions), neglecting the biblical faith of God as Creator (the "who" and "why"). Preoccupation with the "how" questions may result in Christians forgetting that the biblical witness of God as Creator and Sustainer (Ps. 104) teaches us how to respond to the Creator in worship, faith, and obedience now in our daily Christian lives.

As we strive to be a global church, we need to be aware of our global responsibility. In the 21st century, environmental problems will affect countless numbers of lives globally. Increasingly, toxic chemicals pollute air and water, food and potable water is scarce, and natural resources are depleted. In areas where the environment has become severely damaged, Christians can be "salt and light," bringing a message of hope while concurrently working with the local people to identify and address environmental concerns that affect their quality of life. At the same time, we can demonstrate compassion towards the rest of creation, just as God is compassionate toward all He has made (Ps. 145).

Proposed by the Advisory Committee on Environmental Stewardship, Nazarene Compassionate Ministries, Inc.

From Eden to the New Jerusalem

I'm fascinated with all those "R" words that somehow inserted themselves as the palaver of compassionate ministries---restoration, renewal, revitalization, rehabilitation, reformation, renovation, rejuvenation, regentrification, remedy, rescue, revival and a dozen others.

Of course, the "re" suggests doing something over again. Implicit is the idea that Eden existed in all of its natural harmony and purity, that something horrible contaminated it, but through the grace of God, our efforts and His sacrifice, we can somehow pull it back into a relative Edenic state. The sick can be healed, the homeless can be housed, the imprisoned can be liberated, addictions can be broken, oppression can be lifted, the violent can be tamed, sinners can be saved. In other words, by eliminating the problems that messed up Eden, we can return to such, or at least remember whimsically what might have been and couch our efforts into that nostalgic hope.

I suggest that this is not good enough. Our imagination of God's purposes looks less backward than forward. Less ontological (in the nature of things) than teleological (in the future of things) whatever that means! The New Jerusalem should fire our imagination rather than Eden.

I suspect that in serving others, we don't imagine them optimally in terms that harp back to archetypal memories but rather to the unimagined possibilities inherent in the New Jerusalem. Our imaginings must break the bounds of conventionality, see things that the world can't envision, create what the world can't design, thoughts fired by what the Spirit would have us think and do, what the coming Kingdom might look like.

Scripture drips with the sense of "newness"---a new heaven and earth, a new song, a new stone, a new name. God makes all things new. What we need is not solely renewal, but "newal", not just renovation, but "novation", not just revival but "vival".

A case in point: years ago, I watched a PBS documentary on Mother Teresa in Beirut in the midst of its bloody civil war. As the scene unfolds, she is being hosted by her Catholic brothers who have advised her that it is impossible for her to go across war lines to rescue the abandoned children in an orphanage on the other side. It is just too dangerous.

She dismisses the danger saying that it is God's will that she go and salvage these children. Therefore, she is going to pray for a truce that night that will allow her to cross the lines.

The next scene shows her the following day. A truce has been declared; she has retrieved the children. In a scene etched forever into my consciousness, one teenage boy rigid with terror and curled up in the fetal position feels the tender caress of a sister. In a moment, his shaking body suddenly relaxes. Those dark eyes haunted with horror look into her face and find peace.

Even in thinking about this, I weep. For in it, I catch a glimpse of a compassion not configured to logic, to security, to replication. It is driven by a hope that transcends the past, by an imagination fixed on a future with uncalculated possibilities. And in the process, we, ourselves, become new.

A Biblical Perspective on AIDS

From the Church of the Nazarene Guidelines on HIV/AIDS

Many of those living with HIV/AIDS, as well as family members, might rightfully ask where God is in the midst of this ongoing tragedy. Our Biblical orientation offers this perspective.

According to book of Genesis, God created a world and a relationship between Adam, Eve, and himself in perfect balance and harmony, devoid of disease. Our ancestors, in choosing to disobey God, set in motion the principle of sin which has unleashed a host of consequences built on the human tendency to make bad choices framed out of our innate hostility towards God and our futile independence from him. Many dysfunctional consequences have resulted from this, including alienation, disease, and death.

All are victims of the universal "curse" of sin, and have also engaged in the habits of sin. Similarly, all suffer the consequences of sin, though their individual actions may or may not be directly responsible for any specific result of HIV infection.

At the same time, we understand God to be supremely merciful, setting means in motion from the beginning of time by which divine grace could rectify God's relationship with humankind and human beings with each other. This was seen historically in the formation of what was intended to be a "holy people" called Israel. The culmination of this people came to us in Christ, God with us. In Christ, God's original design of harmony, health, and balance for humankind was restored. Through the death and resurrection of Christ and by the power of the Holy Spirit, God's love encompasses all people and is more pervasive and persuasive than all the power and effects of sin in the world, over which Christ has triumphed.

It is well known that HIV/AIDS is often an unintended consequence of sexual promiscuity where God's moral law has been offended. However, there are many instances where the disease has been perpetuated through no direct or immediate violation of God's laws, such as in the case of affected innocent spouses, contaminated invasive instruments, parent to infant transmission, or through blood transfusions. We believe that whatever might be the cause, God is with us and sustains us in the midst of human tragedy and need, seeking to reconcile and heal both the causes and effects of the disease at the physical, emotional, psychological, social, and spiritual levels.

Disease may be a consequence of wayward lifestyles that, in the case of HIV/AIDS or blood contamination, results periodically in the transmission of the infection even to the innocent. Yet, in the pursuit for causes, we need to be reminded of Jesus' encounter with the blind man (John 9:1-12). Jesus' response suggests that, for ministry purposes, his interest did not center on the causes of the disease, nor on its consequences, but rather on the miracle that would result in great glory to God. Ministry seeks occasions where God's glory can be exhibited in the midst of sin, pain, and suffering as seen through altered lifestyles, patient care, Christian compassion, and miraculous hope that shines even through the shadow of death.

To partner with Christ in the task of ministering to those threatened by or exposed to HIV/AIDS does not lead one to simple answers. But to so engage the disease is to confront one's own fears

and prejudices with a faithfulness that can fashion discernment and form character reminiscent of Christ himself.

Some Scripture verses that may inform us concerning issues related to any disease include:

Some Causes of Affliction:

Leviticus 18:6-20; Deuteronomy 24:9; 2 Samuel 3:29; John 9:2-3; 2 Corinthians 12:7

The Cry of the Afflicted:

Psalm 102; 2 Kings 5:1-19

Responsibilities of Those Afflicted:

Leviticus 13-15; I Corinthians 10:6-13; James 5:10-11; James 5:13

God's Care for Those Afflicted:

Psalm 103:1-3; Isaiah 53:3-4; Matthew 11:28; Mark 1:40-41; Luke 5:31-32

Christian Care for Those Afflicted:

Matthew 10:8; Matthew 25:36, 43; Romans 12:9-21

SECTION THREE: How did the Church of the Nazarene respond to "Compassion?"

Nazarene Manual Statements That Deal with Compassionate Ministries

From the Historical Statement

The Church of the Nazarene

In October 1895, Phineas F. Bresee, D.D., and Joseph P. Widney, M.D., with about 100 others, including Alice P. Baldwin, Leslie F. Gay, W. S. and Lucy P. Knott, C. E. McKee, and members of the Bresee and Widney families, organized the Church of the Nazarene at Los Angeles. At the outset they saw this church as the first of a denomination that preached the reality of entire sanctification received through faith in Christ. They held that Christians sanctified by faith should follow Christ's example and preach the Gospel to the poor. They felt called especially to this work. They believed that unnecessary elegance and adornment of houses of worship did not represent the spirit of Christ but the spirit of the world, and that their expenditures of time and money should be given to Christlike ministries for the salvation of souls and the relief of the needy. They organized the church accordingly.

-Nazarene Manual 2001-2005

From the General Rules

- (5) Seeking to do good to the bodies and souls of men; feeding the hungry, clothing the naked, visiting the sick and imprisoned, and ministering to the needy, as opportunity and ability are given (Matthew 25:35-36; 2 Corinthians 9:8-10; Galatians 2:10; James 2:15-16; 1 John 3:17-18).
- —Nazarene Manual 2001-2005

From Ministry and Christian Service

413.5. To care for the people by pastoral visitation, particularly the sick and needy.—Nazarene Manual 2001-2005

From Auxiliary Constitutions

NMI officers in the local church

In consultation with the pastor, a local council may add other officers, namely, a Work and Witness coordinator, an Alabaster secretary, a World Evangelism Broadcast secretary, a Publicity secretary, and a Compassionate Ministries coordinator, and any other officer deemed necessary. The nomination and election of these officers shall follow the same procedure specified for officers other than the local president.

These officers, together with chapter chairpersons, children's and youth mission directors, and pastor, shall constitute the local NMI Council.

—Nazarene Manual 2001-2005

NMI District Officers

When a District Council in consultation with the district superintendent shall desire, other officers may be added to the District Council, namely, a Work and Witness coordinator, an Alabaster secretary, a World Evangelism Broadcast secretary, a Compassionate Ministries coordinator, a Publicity secretary, a Deputation secretary, and children and youth mission directors. The nomination and election of these officers shall be by the District Council or shall

follow the same procedure specified in Article III, Section 2, for officers other than district presidents. The determination of election method of the additional officers shall be the decision of the District Council, in consultation with the district superintendent.

-Nazarene Manual 2001-2005

From the Appendix

904.5. Responsibility to the Poor

The Church of the Nazarene believes that Jesus commanded His disciples to have a special relationship to the poor of this world; that Christ's Church ought, first, to keep itself simple and free from an emphasis on wealth and extravagance and, second, to give itself to the care, feeding, clothing, and shelter of the poor. Throughout the Bible and in the life and example of Jesus, God identifies with and assists the poor, the oppressed, and those in society who cannot speak for themselves. In the same way, we, too, are called to identify with and to enter into solidarity with the poor and not simply to offer charity from positions of comfort. We hold that compassionate ministry to the poor includes acts of charity as well as a struggle to provide opportunity, equality, and justice for the poor. We further believe that the Christian responsibility to the poor is an essential aspect of the life of every believer who seeks a faith that works through love.

Finally, we understand Christian holiness to be inseparable from ministry to the poor in that it drives the Christian beyond his or her own individual perfection and toward the creation of a more just and equitable society and world. Holiness, far from distancing believers from the desperate economic needs of people in our world, motivates us to place our means in the service of alleviating such need and to adjust our wants in accordance with the needs of others. (2001)

(Exodus 23:11; Deuteronomy 15:7; Psalms 41:1; 82:3; Proverbs 19:17; 21:13; 22:9; Jeremiah 22:16; Matthew 19:21; Luke 12:33; Acts 20:35; 2 Corinthians 9:6; Galatians 2:10)

-Nazarene Manual 2001-2005

904.17. HIV/AIDS

(Human Immunodeficiency Virus/Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome)

Since 1981, our world has been confronted with a most devastating disease known as HIV/AIDS. In view of the deep need of HIV/AIDS sufferers, Christian compassion motivates us to become accurately informed about HIV/AIDS. Christ would have us to find a way to communicate His love and concern for these sufferers in any and every country of the world. (2001)

-Nazarene Manual 2001-2005

The Compassionate Impulse of the Church of the Nazarene

This article was taken from "Rescue the Perishing, Care for the Dying: Historical Sources and Documents on Compassionate Ministry drawn from the Inventories of the Nazarene Archives," edited by Stan Ingersol. You can order this publication in total by contacting Nazarene Archives at (816) 333-7000 x2445.

"Compassionate ministries" does not encompass all that is implied in the biblical concept of social justice and, yet it touches on the very heart of that broad concept. Social justice cannot ignore the realm of politics or the modes of economic organization. At the same time, a full-orbed biblical concept of social justice is concerned not only with improving the structures of our existence but with whether those living within the structures truly regard and treat one another as sisters and brothers.

Compassionate ministries is lodged in this latter domain. Compassionate ministries do not substitute for just laws in a fallen world, but just laws alone do not lead a society to fulfill its highest good—that of heartfelt, voluntary social righteousness. Just laws, like unjust ones, have the capacity to teach and, they can create the conditions in which minds—and yes even hearts, are gradually altered. But the conviction of those who share the Christian perspective is that the final and deepest dimensions of social justice are rooted in and empowered by grace and not wholly by achievement.

"Compassionate ministries" is a contemporary Nazarene name for an old idea. Compassionate ministries are the primary modes through which Nazarenes have exercised a corporate witness to the social implications of the gospel, leaving expressions of concern for the political dimensions of social justice to the peculiar response of individual consciences. (The major exception to this was Nazarene involvement in the politics of prohibition.) Compassionate ministries were so widespread in early Nazarene life and so fundamental to the founders' idea of what it was to be Christian that the church's first generation bore a stamp unique in the history of the denomination. To understand their perspective one must note two competing conceptions of how Christians should face the social crisis of the early 20th century.

EARLY NAZARENE CONCEPTIONS

The body of Christian theory known as the Social Gospel, represented by Washington Gladden and Walter Rauschenbusch, had few representatives in its truest sense among early Nazarenes. The Social Gospel was a response to the economic and social dislocations caused by industrialization and, it united Christian thought to an economic critique of high-finance capitalism and a specific body of social theory that few Nazarenes knew except indirectly. The Social Gospel advocates were unswervingly united with the plight and causes of industrial labor. No early Nazarene leader completely fits the profile of the Social Gospel advocate, although B. F. Haynes, first editor of *Herald of Holiness*, came close on several points: clear pacifist tendencies prior to America's entry into World War I, the acceptance of principles that he referred to as "Christian socialism," and the willingness to publish in the denomination's paper some strong critiques of industrial capitalism and its managers. On the last point, Andrew Adam's "The Great Modern Sin" (*Herald of Holiness*, June 26, 1912) is the finest example. The example of Haynes indicates that the Social Gospel was leavening the Holiness Movement without actually capturing it. Thus, the early 20th century Social Gospel was influencing a

holiness tradition that had given witness to the conviction that revivalism had strong social impulses since the days of John Wesley.

There was, however, a far different idea among some early Nazarenes, namely the view that efforts to meet physical needs of the poor and suffering were not proper concerns for an evangelistic church. Among early Nazarenes, this view fared poorly, just like the pure Social Gospel did, and it was muted, but in subsequent generations that view moved steadily to the fore. Eventually, it came to dominate the Church of the Nazarene's answer to the social question and to obscure the fundamentally different response to social problems that had characterized the first generation.

But the broad ground among early Nazarenes was neither pure Social Gospel nor utter indifference. Instead, the broad ground was occupied firmly by those who supported an evangelistic program accompanied by fitting ministries of social welfare. This viewpoint was instinctively inbred within the new denomination. Many of its urban congregations developed directly from rescue missions aimed at reclaiming the lives of alcoholics and transients. Others, like Phineas Bresee's Los Angeles First Church, were the products of a deliberate attempt to bring a sense of community to the slums by focusing ministry on families of the poor. Homes for unwed mothers became the center around which Nazarene communities were organized in places like Pilot Point, Texas, and Bethany, Oklahoma, while orphanages and homes for dependent children were scattered widely across the Nazarene map. Among Nazarenes on the East and West coasts, the deaconess movement was a vehicle through which women combined a ministry of the Word with a ministry of service to the poor and imprisoned.

FAMILY ENTERPRISE OR CHURCH MINISTRY?

The social ministries of the Church of the Nazarene's early years were largely family enterprises, owned and operated by church members. Still, they were considered to be Nazarene in their basic identity. They were promoted within the denomination, their managers were given access to official platforms and organs of the church, and they derived most of their financial support from the church. A few, such as the Nazarene Rescue Home in Bethany or the Peniel Orphanage in Texas, were owned for short periods by districts or by the general church.

In the first phases of institutionalization, the early Church of the Nazarene signaled its support of compassionate ministries by creating standing committees and permanent church boards to deal with social ministry concerns. The First General Assembly of 1907, uniting Eastern and Western Nazarenes, had two committees with clear social overtones: the Committee on Deaconess Work and the Committee on Prohibition. The Second General Assembly of 1908 added the Committee on Rescue work. Southern influence on this matter was distinct. The new committee's chairman, J. T. Upchurch, and its secretary, Rev. Mrs. E. J. Sheeks, both stemmed from the Southern-based Holiness Church of Christ that united with the Nazarenes that year at Pilot Point.

In the restructuring that occurred at the Third General Assembly (1911), five "General Church Boards" were created. One of these was the Rescue Commission headed by Seth C. Rees. At the Fourth General Assembly (1915), the Board of Rescue. Work replaced the Rescue

Commission. At the Fifth General Assembly (1919), the number of church boards was expanded to eleven, of which two were the General Board of Social Welfare and the General Orphanage Board. In 1923, however, the General Superintendents called for a consolidation of all church boards. In the reorganization that followed, the General Board of Social Welfare merged with the General Orphanage Board.

The primary function of the Board of Social Welfare and its antecedents was to publicize the various independent and semi-independent enterprises, rather than coordinate or encourage a tight system of denominationally-owned social welfare institutions. As the General Superintendents stated in 1923, "In a general way we have not accomplished a great deal in rescue work, that is, outside of the individual rescue homes located in different parts of the country. There has been no extensive plan executed throughout the connection."

Those independent institutions, however, helped shape early Nazarene identity. Pilot Point, Texas, long honored in Nazarene memory as the site of the Second General Assembly and the union of "North and South," harbored a colony of holiness folks whose ministries centered around a home for unwed mothers, a children's home, and a small college. This fact symbolizes that the Church of the Nazarene has been organically related to ministries of social welfare from its founding. The names of such Nazarene founders as Roberts, Jernigan, Rees, Upchurch, and others are indelibly linked with the high ideal of social compassion.

Discovering Disability in our Genes

As one travels in Los Angeles on the Santa Monica Freeway, near the south side of the Arlington Ave exit is a large sign that overhangs the highway, announcing J. P. Widney High School.

For those who know their Nazarene history, the name J.P. Widney rings loud bells of recognition. For it was he who served, along with co-founder Phineas F. Bresee, of what is now called Los Angeles First Church of the Nazarene, considered the "Mother" Church of the denomination. The Church, founded in 1895 in downtown Los Angeles, ascribed its origins to the call of God to minister to poor and discarded of society. Bresee himself wrote in 1898: "We went in poverty, to give ourselves—and what God might give us—determined to forego provision for the future and old age, in order to see the salvation of God while we were yet here. Hundreds of dollars have gone to the poor. . . the gospel comes to a multitude without money and without price, and the poorest of the poor are entitled to a front seat at the Church of the Nazarne, the only condition being that they come early enough to get there."

It was Dr. Widney who named the Church, the "Church of the Nazarene, one morning at daybreak, after a whole night of prayer. It immediately seemed to him to symbolize "the toiling, lowly mission of Christ." It was the name which Jesus used of himself, according to Widney, "the name which was used in derision of Him by His enemies." It was the name which above all others linked Him to "the great toiling, struggling, sorrowing heart of the world. It is Jesus, Jesus of Nazareth, to whom the world in its misery and despair turns, that it may have hope."

Dr. Widney was also a physician, founder of the Southern California Medical Association and the President of the University of Southern California Medical School.

It is unlikely that the highschoolers of Widney High School know much about this history. However, their school is unique as high schools go. Yet its naming is so consistent with the message of the early Nazarene Church and its commitment to the needy.

You see, Widney High School is ever so special! It is a school for students ages 13-22 who are unable to attend regular school due to severe disabilities. Located in Central Los Angeles, Widney High School students are bussed in from a wide geographical area that reflects the diverse ethnic and cultural backgrounds of the city of Los Angeles.

Who would have guessed this linkage between the origins of the Church of the Nazarene and the challenge of ministering to the disabled? And yet, there it is emblazoned in a sign that, for those who really want to check out its origins, can find them rooted in a theology of wholeness that marked the character and calling of the early Church of the Nazarene. May our future be so marked!

Interview with Tom Nees

(Copied from The Preacher's Magazine, June, July, August, 1998)

Nazarene Compassionate Ministries: Tom Nees, you've rendered a great service with your book, *Compassion Evangelism*. I'd like to ask a few questions about the book and your interest in compassionate ministry. What influences in your life led to your interest in compassionate ministry?

TOM NEES: Certainly the culture of Holiness denominations preserved the essence of the 18th –century Evangelical Revival. While its focus on poor people was muted in the middle 20th century, it was always there. So I think it came from within the biblical historical tradition of which I'm a part.

In addition, I graduated from seminary in 1962, and my formative years in ministry were during the 60's. I started out on the West Coast, in California. My own consciousness was shaped by so many things—the civil rights movement, the antiwar movement, the free speech movement, urban riots. All these things were going on in the tumultuous '60's.

During that time, as I was being shaped by events, I began to be more curious about our own denominational history and wanted to learn how others were dealing with the critical issues of the day from their own theological perspectives.

NCM: You mention in your book about wandering through the stacks of a seminary library in Washington, D.C., and discovering John Wesley, who you were introduced to as a student, but discovering him anew as a social reformer.

NEES: That was a Josiah experience; the prophet discovers the buried treasure of the Scripture in the Temple and felt that here was this heritage that had [not been tapped]. I'd read Wesley but was totally uninformed about the extent of the social impact of John and Charles Wesley's movement

NCM: If Wesley is an intellectual and theological precursor to your interest in social action, what personal influences shaped your interest?

NEES: I grew up with a very rich heritage. My grandparents on both sides of my family were pioneers of Holiness ministry in the western states of Montana, North Dakota, and South Dakota. My grandmother was an ordained elder, as was Grandfather Nees. They started churches and worked in out-of-the-way marginal places. I always thought of my dad as a compassionate evangelist because his preaching always had a soft edge to it. He gave an appeal with tears. He always offered an appealing presentation.

In our home, we always had somebody living with us. My parents took in people from my earliest days. I don't remember a time when we didn't have someone living with us. This was just the way of our home, a place where people in distress were welcomed.

NCM: Why did you decide to write *Compassion Evangelism*?

NEES: The title is intended to be quite specific. It's not "compassionate evangelism," another version of evangelism. It's really intended to redefine both "compassion" and "evangelism," so that the two words merge when you begin to understand them. Even within the Holiness Movement today, with emphasis on compassionate ministry, there still is a perception that compassionate ministry responds to the temporal, physical needs of people, while evangelism responds to the spiritual, eternal needs of people. That perception is based on a poor biblical anthropology—on a misunderstanding of the way these words are used in the context of the Gospels and all through Scriptures. We need to redefine our terms—not to promote compassionate ministries, but to help the church have a correct biblical focus. I've never thought of compassionate ministries as being outside the central focus or central mission of the church. It's not a tangent. It's not something you add on and do if you have time. It's right at the heart of everything we do.

NCM: So you're saying that compassionate ministry is not just another means to do evangelism, but part of a broader pictures.

NEES: Right. It is evangelism if it's rightly done. On the other side, some people are involved with compassionate ministries who have misunderstood Christian compassion. There is a kind of human altruism I would applaud, but it's unapologetically a response to temporal needs of people without any particular interest in their spiritual welfare.

As there is a definition of evangelism that is one-sided, so there is a definition of compassion that is secular. Sometimes even compassionate ministries practitioners have not understood that distinction well enough. In the name of compassionate ministries, they may have engaged in something that's purely secular compassion. I don't necessarily have a problem with that. We need more people doing it, but we need to understand the point I make in the book. Christian compassion is holistic. It is concerned as much with the spiritual welfare of people as with their temporal welfare.

Certainly in my experience of working with people in need, you deal with whole persons in every instance. You deal with their discouragement, their guilt, their remorse, their hunger, their homelessness. All of these things are wrapped up together in an individual. You can't separate the spiritual from the temporal when you're dealing with people in a context of Christian ministry.

NCM: You see compassion as central to the work of the church and not just a side interest.

NEES: Absolutely. If you go to Luke 6:36, the conclusion of the Sermon on the Mount and elsewhere in the New Testament, the words "mercy" and "compassion" are virtually synonymous. A special word is used only in relationship to the compassion of Jesus, but the more common word is most often translated "mercy." However, they're virtually synonymous. In Luke, at the conclusion of the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus tells His disciples to "be compassionate as your father (in heaven) is compassionate" (6:35, JB)

Compassion is not a matter of what we do; it's who we are. Compassion is the most important part of our description of God. To the degree that we believe our lives are to be godly, we should be compassionate.

NCM: Compassion is central to Jesus' message and mission.

NEES: Compassion is the nature of God replicated in His followers. Evangelism proclaims the nature of God. To evangelize is to proclaim the Good News. The Good News tells about a compassionate God.

NCM: You write in your book about the early Church of the Nazarene and about the vision of Phineas F. Bresee, the founder. In your opinion, did early Nazarenes understand this difference between compassion and evangelism and how they related to each other?

NEES: I think Bresee and Wesley would find our notion of compassionate ministries very curious, because for them there was no separation. They didn't talk about evangelism **and** compassionate ministries. They just did it all. After Bresee, in the 1920's, the schism in American church life occurred between Fundamentalists and liberals. The social gospel movement emphasized the care of society, along with its liberal theological tendency. The Fundamentalists—who may have had some influence on the Church of the Nazarene—began to say, "We've got to be against anything that they're for!" So we got pushed into a backwater of reaction and forgot the keen edge of our own heritage.

We're trying to bring together the two sides of Christianity that were never separate for Wesley and Bresee. Wesley was never called upon to defend his interest in starting schools and the Foundery, a home for indigent widows in London, for starting little textile factories where people could earn some money. Holiness people down to Bresee's time assumed that this was part and parcel.

NCM: In Wesley's time, would his school for orphans have been evaluated in terms of whether any of those children got saved? Or would that question even be considered?

NEES: That's an interesting question because we assume the Good News is attractive. Yet Wesley never gave an altar call. It would not have occurred to someone in Wesley's time to count people at the end of the service who had responded to the gospel. He simply announced the gospel, and people responded in all sorts of ways. The same was true in his work with orphans and widows.

Only in our technological, managerial era did we become interested in techniques of how to develop a presentation of the gospel to guarantee a response at the end. So we become concerned about the process, or as Marshall McLuhan says, "The medium is the message." Perhaps we're overly concerned about that.

Early Nazarenes didn't do compassionate ministry in order to accomplish something. They did it because this was the natural expression of their Christianity. This is what you do as a Christian. You assume that if you lift up Christ and if you are compassionate, people will be drawn into the

Kingdom. Today we are so geared now to think about the how-tos in order to produce a certain result that we almost forget the primary motivation. If we are compassionate as our Heavenly Father is compassionate, that's attractive. People want to be cared for. People ask two questions when they come to our churches: "Do I belong?" and "Do you care?" People are looking for compassion and community.

NCM: Do you think that when the church has not understood a proper relationship between compassion and evangelism, and that compassion becomes simply a means to an end, and that compassionate ministry is just another hook to draw people into the church—is this another form of manipulation?

NEES: Yes, there have always been distortions like that. There are ways of manipulating people, with evangelism techniques and with compassion. We always need to be careful that we're not manipulating people, that we're ministering as an expression of our calling, and not with any ulterior motives.

NCM: What, in your opinion, is the cause for the Church of the Nazarene having a resurgence of compassionate ministries over the last 20 years?

NEES: Several things have occurred. Some occurred in my experience of which I wasn't even aware. I assumed, when I began compassionate ministries in Washington, D.C., that I'd be excommunicated. And I don't think I was paranoid. I'd seen enough and witnessed enough people who had tried similar things to assume that there was no place for this kind of ministry in the church as I knew it. I couldn't have been more surprised because the response was just the opposite!

As I look back on it, I can think of two or three things. First, we are young enough as a denomination to have members in our churches who are not that far removed from the early days. They remember that the church in its origin was a string of city missions, on the West Coast, for instance.

Some people on the East Coast still remember that in Boston and Washington, D.C., we started among the poor and disadvantaged. There's a historical memory among us. When I first began talking about my interest, I found that the older folks often were responsive. They could say, "Yes, I remember! That's where we got started." They had friends in mission work of one kind or another. We had orphanages and rest homes. This historical memory was always there, although we had backed away in midcentury from official church-sponsored ministries.

Among Nazarenes, you can appeal to John Wesley and Phineas Bresee and get no argument. People may not be doing compassion evangelism, but they have respect and commitment to this movement. Of course, the Salvation Army, with identical theology, identical spirit, is always there. Sometimes we've argued with them about what we thought may be their imbalance. Actually we are a part of a historical tradition that has produced the Salvation Army, the world's largest Christian charitable organization. We belong to a tradition that ties us to some very significant activity.

The 60's produced a critical consciousness among young people that increasingly made Nazarene young people want to be involved. About the same time, The Hunger and Disaster Fund was established which became Compassionate Ministries. When news of natural disasters came in, Nazarene called our headquarters and asked the question, "What are we doing about it?" It happens every thing there is a national disaster. Wherever there is human need, Nazarenes now generally assume that the church should be involved in meeting it.

NCM: The early Nazarenes saw compassionate ministry as a defining characteristic of the movement. Do you see this as one of our defining characteristics today?

NEES: We need to get back to our roots and to understand holiness as optimism about the possibilities for personal and social change, and to realize that holiness as we understand it was developed by Wesley in the midst of an urban ministry to the poor. Wesley's message wasn't an ivory-tower theology. He wrote on horseback, working with indigent people. When we take holiness out of that context, it becomes a cut-flower, and we reduce it to an inner emotional experience that never gives a satisfactory definition of holiness in its total understanding.

Our synthesis of evangelism and social concern remains essential to our Nazarene identity. I believe the Wesleyan-Holiness biblical theological tradition is one of the finest modern syntheses of church and society, compassion and evangelism, that you can find.

NCM: Why should a local church do compassionate ministry? Do local churches have the resources to meet the needs of people who are economically disadvantaged?

NEES: It comes back to a church's understanding of its mission. I have concern about churches that start projects without going through the process of mission definition because a project can become conflictive and disruptive in a local church if it's not regarded as part of its overall mission. If a church defines its mission biblically and in line with the Wesleyan tradition, there's no way that a local congregation can avoid responding to needy people. That's who we are. That's what we do.

Read our historical documents. Wesley and Bresee very specifically took Luke 4 as their theme. They were called to preach the gospel to the poor. They didn't say this was the only thing to do, but there were others who could preach to the rich. They specifically saw themselves a giving direction to the movement that would respond to the poor.

It's not a matter of money. It's something much more important than an organized program. It's what people do on their own. It's in a thousand daily encounters in which we express compassion. It's sharing. It's making room for one more person around the table.

In every church we take the little bit that we've got and ask God to bless it; then we watch the miracles happen. Wesley had strong statements on stewardship. Part of compassion is understanding with Wesley that we don't own anything, that God owns everything, and that we are stewards of His resources. If he's given us more than someone else, then we have greater responsibility. Wesley had a strong emphasis on responsibility, and not just in tithing but in the total stewardship of our lives and resources.

I have a good friend who says that our biggest challenge is to keep our churches poor. He says that the problem is that our churches invest their resources in elaborate buildings and programs to the point that they cannot afford poor people, that they need people who are rich in order to support these programs. Thus the church turns away from the poor and needy. Maybe our task is to help keep the church poor enough that it can respond to the people to whom the church should be responding.

NCM: By becoming more middle-class, did we lose sensitivity to the needs of the poor?

NEES: There are some interesting sociological and theological things at work here. We've grown up with the gospel of affluence in our American society. Listen to the testimonies of God's blessing; it's always the testimony to affluence. We wouldn't know what to do with John Wesley today. He decided to live on 10 percent of his income and give away the rest. He took a voluntary vow of poverty. He would be out of place in our churches. We assume that the evidence of God's blessing is wealth. Wesley and Bresee, I think understood it rightly, although neither were poor. Both had the capacity to generate income. They identified with the poor and needy, but both were aware that the biblical message is that wealth, more often than not, is gained by less-than-righteous motives and actions.

We cannot assume that material wealth is an evidence of God's blessing. It may be the reverse. Page after page the warnings in the Scripture tell about the destruction that can come from pride in material abundance. We've turned that around; often the poor are regarded as somehow less fit. A discussion ponders in our society about the deserving and undeserving poor. Who are the undeserving poor? The church has to say, "If we understand grace properly, we're all undeserving."

My wife grew up in a very poor family. She was the one, before welfare, that people brought baskets to when she was a child. Her father died, leaving her mother indigent. Fortunately, a Nazarene church paid attention.

NCM: How has your understanding of being a Christian been altered by the poor? How have they helped you?

NEES: I used a Bible study book for a while with a group of people—*Looking at the Bible Through Third World Eyes*. I had to relearn the Scripture when I became acquainted with people whose Christianity had been hammered out on the anvil of suffering. The Bible reads very differently if you come to it as an oppressed people versus a privileged people. I learned that some things I had spiritualized—teachings that I'd spiritualized away—and I relearned the cutting edge of the Scripture by listening to people, particularly Afro-Americans in a poor community.

One of the most amazing stories in American history is how the children of slaves embraced the God of the slaveholders. Within minority poor people lingers a remnant of the gospel that is closer to the heart of things than some of us have grown up with. We really need to learn from that perspective about what it means to follow Jesus in the midst of oppression and rejection.

Most of us have no idea of what Isa. 63 speaks. Read that among a group of poor people. Or a scripture as simple as Mary and Joseph going to Bethlehem and being told that everything is full. The scripture says, "There was no room for them in the inn" (Luke 2:7). I never thought of that as particularly significant, but among Blacks—they all know what it means. There's room—but not for you. Maybe that's what was going on in that story: Mary and Joseph were so poor that there was room for other people but not for them.

That had never occurred to me, but it came out in listening to a sermon in the Black community by the present pastor of Community of Hope. I don't think any of us appreciate how formative one's perspective is. We go into ministry to share Jesus but also to find Jesus. As Mother Teresa says, "Jesus comes to us in the distressing disguise of the homeless and the strangers and the imprisoned."

NCM: What do you say to a church with an interest in compassionate ministries, but no sense of where to begin or how to get started?

NEES: There are a number of practical things. First, some process needs to raise their theological consciousness. Then do a "needs assessment." There are needy people in every neighborhood. A congregation should develop the reputation in its neighborhood that it is the place to go when one is in trouble. The church might not have all of the resources to respond to every need presented, but it can be a place where someone will meet you, be sympathetic, and try to help you find an answer—whether an abused wife, or latchkey kids, or any range of problems in suburbia.

Churches can link up with other churches across town in a needy area. Some of us will have to deliberately go into those areas as Jesus did in Samaria. He didn't have to go to Samaria. Most people went around it. Yet He chose to go there. We must go out of our way to find the poor because most churches have secluded themselves in comfortable suburban surroundings and never see need. If you're going to get in touch with the poor, you will to have to do so deliberately.

We are living in troubling times. The trends look so foreboding that a lot of us would prefer to stick our heads in the sand and pretend that the world isn't there. The church lives in the midst of the world, and we are going to be affected by what goes on. We will either retreat and try to hold what we've got, or we'll get out in the streets and begin to be aggressive in holding out this message of wholeness.

If we don't—if we try to protect what we have—we'll lose our real message. We need our theologians to give us the underpinnings. It's said that there are no revolutions without intellectuals. A lot of people are out there now doing various ministries. We've got over 800 Good Samaritan Churches and almost 200 compassionate ministries centers in the U.S. and Canada and all sorts of things going on. Yet all of that interest has to be supported by a sound biblical, theological foundation. We need people writing about the history of it, so that people understand that what we're doing now is perfectly consistent with Jesus' teaching.

Holiness people seem to need permission to do things. When you talk to them about what Wesley and Bresee were doing, they're generally unaware of this. They need to be informed historically and theologically. They need to know how compassion evangelism is being worked out around the world. Holiness people who have supported world missons through the years have not always realized that we've been doing compassionate ministries all around the world

One of the most revered missionary types we've had is the missionary doctor. The whole notion of a missionary doctor is still out there. It begins with Albert Schweitzer [in the Cameroons] in Africa. I can think of many missionary doctors in the Church of the Nazarene who've been highly revered. We don't have to defend starting clinics and hospitals around the world and responding to natural disasters. But I think we're still not informed enough.

For instance, the Mennonites have a particular view of who they are as a people—as a "peace" church. Volunteerism is a big part of it. They expect their people to be involved. I think we need to work at what is unique and distinctive about the holiness churches. And we need the help of writers, theologians, historians, and others to give us more good information.

The Generals on Compassion and Evangelism

Selected Portions of the Board of General Superintendents Annual Report, Feb. 2001 by Jim Bond

One of our critical objectives in responding to the Great Commission to "go and make disciples of all nations" is "the conversion of sinners." This means evangelism, and we Nazarenes have been resolutely committed to evangelism since our inception. God has acted through Nazarenes to bring hundreds of thousands to saving faith in Jesus Christ during the 20th century. And it continues—we have had record numbers of people join the Church of the Nazarene by profession of faith. God has acted through the Church of the Nazarene!

While we rejoice in this success, let me remind you that 34 percent of our churches in North America and 45 percent of our churches in our six world regions did not receive a single new member by profession of faith in 2000. Question: Is it unreasonable to expect that every church in our denomination, regardless of size, location, or resources, could bring at least one person to salvation within a 365-day period? That should be a minimal goal for a church that lists "the conversion of sinners" as one of our critical objectives.

Jim Peterson sounds a solemn note of warning:

Christians who keep to themselves, who do not experience a continuing influx of people just arriving from the dominion of darkness, soon surround themselves with their own subculture. Receiving no feedback from people fresh from the world, they forget what it's like out there. Peculiar language codes, behavioral patterns, and communication techniques emerge that only have meaning for the insiders. As such, a local body becomes increasingly ingrown. It also becomes stranger and stranger to outsiders. Eventually, communication with the man on the street is impossible.

Disorganization and closure will inevitably follow when this happens to a church. Thus, let us understand as though for the first time: evangelism is not optional. It is absolutely essential in the life of the local church and the denomination.

It is time to reaffirm our commitment to "the conversion of sinners." Do we still believe in sin? Heaven and hell? Do we yet believe that salvation is by faith in Jesus Christ alone and that those who are not trusting in Christ as Savior are lost—now and forever? It is time for Nazarenes everywhere to make evangelism our "numero uno" priority and to get personal, intentional, and passionate about it.

Never has the Christian Church faced such an incalculable challenge; never has the church had such an incredible opportunity for impact. This is our day! The God who has acted in the past is at work in our world today, and He is searching for people through whom He can act redemptively to transform the lives of the broken and lost and ultimately change the moral and spiritual climate of our times. We are such people! We must rise to the challenge! We must prioritize evangelism! Where do we start?

We Must Combine Compassion with Evangelism

Evangelism is all about people and their needs. Instead of bending people's needs to fit the programs of the church, we must focus on people and seek to creatively address their needs in Jesus' name. Authentic Christian compassion prompts our action as holiness people. The terms "compassion" and "evangelism" were separated in our core values statement, though it is appropriate to combine them in the term "compassionate evangelism." All true evangelism flows from the Christian's love of God and neighbor. A person may be compassionate without being a Christian, but one cannot be Christian without being compassionate. To be "in Christ" is to have the mind of Christ—a mind consumed by the needs of others which expresses its love in acts of mercy. Out of genuine love for the lost and broken, we are motivated to address their felt needs. In doing so, opportunity for evangelism may occur. If so, we must be prepared to share the good news of salvation through Christ.

We do not view compassionate acts as instruments for offering salvation. We endeavor to meet the needs of people simply because of the need. That's the Jesus way, and as Wesleyans, we believe we are called to live like Jesus among the poor, disadvantaged, and suffering peoples around us. Historically, compassionate ministries have been high on the Nazarene agenda. It is well documented that early Nazarenes had a keen awareness of the social dimensions that accompany a personal profession of holiness of heart and life. Though this sensitivity has been subject to the ebb and flow of the cultural and religious tides across the past century, it is most encouraging to witness a resurgence of social concerns among Nazarenes globally in recent years. Such activity must be carefully nurtured and theologically understood as we seek to incorporate compassionate ministries into a holistic, Christ-like lifestyle.

As in all things, Jesus is our model. We are informed as to what compassion looks like by what Jesus did and taught. People who live like Jesus obviously refrain from evil; but, like Him, they "go around doing good"—clothing the naked, offering drink to the thirsty, visiting the sick, going into prisons, working for justice, playing the role of the servant, acting as God's agents of reconciliation, and always ready to proclaim the good news of God's love and forgiveness through Jesus Christ.

Move Over L.A.
Reprinted from *Holiness Today*, April 2000, by Fletcher L. Tink

The first Nazarenes were an audacious lot who, in their holy euphoria, dared to bite off a big urban chunk of vision. On October 30, 1895, the organizing minutes of what is now the Los Angeles, California, First Church of the Nazarene, the acknowledged "Mother Church" of the denomination, declared, "The field of labor to which we feel especially called is in the neglected quarters of the cities and wherever else may be found waste places and souls seeking pardon and cleansing from sin. This work we aim to do through the agency of city missions, evangelistic services, house-to-house visitation, caring for the poor, comforting the dying. To this end, we strive personally to walk with God and to incite others so to do."

Knowing Los Angeles First Church intimately, I had the privilege of seeing it come full circle when it returned to that vision in the 1980's. Under the leadership of Ron Benefiel, the church during those years fashioned its philosophy of ministry to emphasize five concepts. church's ministry must be: comprehensive (including all people); holistic (addressing the whole person); contextual (delivering the gospel in forms and ways that are natural to the people who receive it); incarnational (coming from within their worlds rather than from outside); and community-based (recognizing that God's ultimate healing is best found within the Christian community).

The renewed vision worked wonders. Five congregations organized into one church and they throbbed with activity and ministry. The church developed a tag team of services and programs featuring training programs, medical services, youth mobilization, community events, group homes, and evangelism on a dozen fronts. The congregations grew up and together on the cutting edge of creativity. They spun off new ministries: Center City Church of the Nazarene welcomes 350 worshipers in the rescue mission district; Hollywood's Children of the Shepherd project reaches street runaways; and Los Angeles Exposition Park is located in a transitional Hispanic/Black neighborhood near South Central Los Angeles.

But there is another church that may have "out-Bresee-ed" even founder P. F. Bresee's vision for Los Angeles First Church. This church does have conventional ministries, including four Sunday services for 2,000 people, a daily prayer ministry with a goal of cells in 500 homes, evangelism and discipleship ministries, visitation to new families and to prisoners, a businessmen's association, a women's ministry through music, camps for children and youth, and a soup kitchen that fed 30,000 people last year. But these are only the start. Other ministries include:

- Funeral Ministry: Contracts with funeral homes to help grieving families
- SOS Rescue: Ministry to drug addicts
- Ministry of Silence: Ministry to the hearing impaired
- Athletes for Christ: Organized ministry of surfing, soccer, karate, and boxing
- Sweeter than Honey: VBS-type program for children during "spiritist" week
- Radio Ministry: 24-hour Nazarene radio station
- House of the Third Age: Housing for retirees
- Happy Child Project: Shelter for street children

- Patin Skaters: Roller and in-line skaters who evangelize among skater clubs
- Community Center: Built in one of the most infamous hillside slums in the country
- Couples Ministry: Ministry to newlyweds and couples whose marriages are at risk
- Courses: Courses offered in painting, sewing, flower, arranging, and computers
- Preschool: 130 students from preschool through fourth grade
- Training programs: Electrical trade, swimming, and soccer
- King's Teens: Choreography group for teenagers
- Drama ministry

All told, 35 distinct ministries!

In 10 years, this church has exploded from a membership of 100 to 1,700, spinning off a dozen new congregations in the process! In cooperation with another congregation, this dynamic church recently purchased land to plant a church more than 1,000 miles away in an area where there is no evangelical witness.

Where is this church? NILOPOLIS—a northern suburb of Rio de Janeiro, Brazil. According to Pastor Pedro Paulo Matos, there are 3 million people around his parish in an abandoned community, forgotten by politicians and other public figures.

Pastor Pedro Paul shares the secret of the church's creativity, drive, and growth: "Take advantage of every ministry opportunity. See the poor, widows, children, the marginalized, and the rejected, and become a servant to all.

"The church can and must live with creativity, winning persons, and to do this does not require money. The Holy Spirit's presence is enough, and persons in the church bring the money and the human resources.

"Please challenge the people," he continues, "with their paralyzed lives and their safe money, with their gifts and talents stymied, without doing anything for the kingdom of God, or doing so little. We need to accumulate treasures in heaven. We need to work while it is day. The harvest is ready, but where are the laborers?"

Brazil now has 180 million people with a median age of 15. A fledgling democracy and an entrepreneurial spirit energize the country. It would be easy to live on the institutions and ideas of the past. But Pastor Pedro Paul and his people have discovered the entrepreneurial spirit of the Holy Spirit, and they have matched it with the urban needs around them. They would make Phineas F. Bresee proud!

Cali's Christian Cartel

Colombia can be dangerous—for North Americans, for the wealthy, for light aircraft pilots, and for Christian leaders. The U.S. State Department discourages citizens from traveling there. Nazarene Headquarters no longer sends Kansas City personnel there.

Of all the South American countries, Colombia has the sad reputation of a fifty-year history of internal violence. First was the *violencia*, 300,000 deaths in a twenty-year period of political chaos and civil insurrection caused by Marxists guerrillas. This was followed by the domination of the drug cartels in Medillin and Cali, which market 90% of the cocaine to North America. These cartels, in partnership with organized revolutionary armies such as the Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia (FARC) with 17,500 soldiers under arms in lands the size of Switzerland, contest power with paramilitary armies, private militias that fight back, and a government seemingly paralyzed in the mix. Each year, some 35,000 citizens die violently and another 3,000 victims—politicians, the wealthy, expatriates, and Christian leaders—are kidnapped, held for ransom, tortured, and at times killed with their properties confiscated to finance illegal operations. One Nazarene pastor has been kidnapped three times; another was stabbed to death near his home. Though major cities themselves are less dangerous, travel between them is precarious.

Yet a momentous transformation is underway. Recently, I had the opportunity to visit Cali, the steamy sensual city of 3 million residents on the western side of the country where coffee production first ruled until displaced by coca. There I learned a different history.

In 1980, only 30 Protestant churches could be found in Cali. Now there are over 600. And the churches are vibrant and growing. I wanted to learn the secret.

Forty years ago, Billy Graham conducted a campaign here and declared that, when he woke up that morning, he saw three crosses on a hill and Christ the King standing on another hill, evidence that Cali would someday experience revival. Many Christians believed this to be a prophetic statement.

In 1991, a Bolivian missionary became so anguished by the conditions within Cali—15 street murders a day—and the discord between the churches that he called together various groups of intercessors to pray for the city. The prayer and reconciliation movement grew so that by 1995, 55,000 people gathered in an all night vigil in the city soccer stadium, with another 15,000 marching in prayer outside.

Later that year, the missionary, then president of the ministerial council, was gunned down by unknown assailants, creating such a revulsion against violence and a hunger for spiritual renewal that the prayer gatherings were intensified. At one point, 48 hours after one intercessory session, the headline of the local paper declared that for the first time in recent history the city had traversed a weekend with no homicides. During this period of time, seven drug lords were arrested, 900 policemen were fired for graft and corruption, and the mayor declared that Jesus was Lord of Cali.

I wanted to get a flavor of what was happening in Cali, so I attended the Casa de Oración ("House of Prayer") Church of the Nazarene.

When I entered, the church was "rocking" with jubilation and praise. It was their second of three services, their sanctuary of 900 chairs having reached capacity two months earlier. Now their earlier service was filling up, offering the prospect of a fourth service within a few months. As I looked around, these were not worshippers from the margins of society, but rather well-dressed, middle class types—doctors, lawyers, university professors, students, and hundreds of children and young people. Six white-robed young girls undulated in musical rhythms while waving their tambourines. The worship team led us in musical chants about being a soldier for God followed by an internationally renowned salsa singer who engaged us in the intricate rhythms and words of salsa and meringue-styled choruses. The diminutive pastoral duo, Adalberto and Nineye Herrera, each expressed their genuine love for their people, she proclaiming the Scripture promise for the week, he preaching competently on the prayer of Jabez. I noted that as Scriptures were read throughout the service, the congregation had been drilled to cite for memory the verses and scrupulously follow relevant passages in their Bibles.

Thirteen people came forward to receive Christ, added to the eight who proclaimed new-found faith in the earlier service.

I wondered what the secret was to their church growth, so I queried various members of the congregation including the pastoral family itself. Among many, ten reasons became most obvious.

1. Prayer: Unanimously, all said that growth came coupled with intense prayer. The pastoral couple started prayer meeting daily at 6:00 a.m. in 1996 with a committed core of five. A year later, that core had dwindled to three. But they stuck it out until now, where Nineye leads prayer each day for twenty people at 4:00 a.m. with specific attention to the *cosecha* (harvest). By 6:00, one hundred people assemble, on their way to work, with prayers oriented to their tasks and temptations of the day. By 7:00, another group assembles. On Wednesdays, over 400 meet for the entire morning of prayer and fasting. Youth, women, and others have their special times of intercession.

Three outcomes result from such a church lifestyle of prayer. (1) Intimacy and community is formed within the various prayer groups. As Pastor Adalberto says, prayer constitutes the *pulmones*, the lungs, the life-giving breath of the church. (2) As a result of prayer, the congregation is seeing daily evidences of signs and wonders, miracles, and answered prayer that in turn become part of the celebration of the community. (3) Prayer is an invitation for God to work his own surprises in the church, resulting in a church growth style dependent not on cause and effect manipulation, but on the sheer serendipity of unconstricted grace.

2. <u>Signs and Wonders</u>: Stories abound throughout the congregation of God's miraculous power. One medical doctor's wife displayed, with unabated glee, her newborn infant. Unable to have children, or so she thought, then confined to bed for

nine months, then birth complications resulting in her baby's death in the womb and yet, voila, here she was with child, healthy and happy, and convinced that God performs miracles. I was told about another child who stopped breathing in one of their services, but after prayer the child instantaneously recovered. The elderly lady dancing with her tambourine in front of me was bed-ridden with rheumatism three years ago. Now her unfettered movements telegraph clearly the message of God's healing touch.

- 3. <u>Varied Communication Methods</u>: This Nazarene Church now supports a daily radio and television ministry along with periodic advertising spots. A battery of five telephone operators answers an average of one hundred inquiries a day, offering spiritual counseling, information, prayer, and invitations to the church. Forty percent of the newcomers to the church are enticed by the multi-media message. Recently, they upgraded their web page of <www.nazareno.net> and e-mail address (<iglesia@colombianet.net>) and received a response from a Roman Catholic priest inviting the Church of the Nazarene to come to start a ministry there in his city of Medellin.
- 4. <u>Context of Need and Desperation</u>: In my conversations with several members, their rush to grace followed personal tragedies so common in this nation. Lizbeth, a Lydia-type hostess, shared her personal anguish of losing two sons and a son-in-law—all pilots—to aviation accidents. I didn't dare ask her if they were shoot-downs. But as a result, her life was turned over to Christ, and her widowed daughter, in a distant city, is already organizing the beginnings of the Church of the Nazarene there.
- 5. Compassionate Ministry Outreach: On Saturday nights, twenty or so youth prepare food and clothing that they deliver to the homeless huddled on the underside of the local soccer stadium. There, they conscript candidate drug-addicts to enlist in one of two drug rehabilitation homes that the church operates. Forty men populate one home, twenty-five the other. It was pointed out to me that the ushers for the morning services are the clients from these homes, now delivered from their destructive lifestyles. In a recent youth retreat, one hundred young adults placed on their fingers rings (made by a member of the church) symbolizing total surrender to Jesus Christ and availability for service and ministry. At Christmas, 700 packages of gifts were distributed to other poorer Nazarene churches. And currently a preschool is being planned at the facility.
- **Quality and Sustained Leadership**: Pastor Adalberto admitted to me that some unwitting missionary prematurely sent him and his wife off to Cali 22 years ago, totally unprepared for the task assigned. He says that he had been neither baptized nor trained for the ministry and wondered even if he were a *cristiano* or maybe just a *cristino*. Yet God overcame the obstacles. Over the years, training, experience, diligence and openness to divine leadership have endowed him wisdom and credibility that are now paying handsome dividends. What if he had left after fifteen years? What if he and his wife hadn't put up with miserable housing, little furniture, and the discomforts of an impoverished congregation? To have settled for greener

pastures would have snipped off the glorious days they are experiencing now. As one member told me, "They treat everyone with love and dignity, not just because they have known us and shepherded us, but because they themselves have known the austerity and desperateness that any of us have experienced."

I was impressed by the work ethic of the entire pastoral staff and especially of Adalberto and Nineye. They are totally absorbed in ministry. It is their bread and butter, twenty four hours a day. And for those who critique such obsessive service, all three of their young adult children are actively engaged in leadership roles in the church.

- Networking: When, five years ago, the Bolivian prayed for the unity of the Christian Church, prayer was answered by the dissolving of ecclesiastic barriers. Pastor Adalberto sees the growth in his church as nothing unique but rather the rising of a tide of Christian expansion that cuts across all denominations. The goal is not just local church renewal but "community transformation" of a sort that the very personality of Cali will be changed. As such, he is actively involved in the ministerial association, networks in the city, and encourages his members to participate in interchurch activities. Often, his church is host to interdenominational gatherings and prayer meetings.
- **Vision:** Adalberto believes that his church can grow in the next few years to a regular attendance of 5,000 in 5 services. He is seeking to attract not Christians from elsewhere but rather the unsaved. Already, his church has helped spawn 26 other congregations—10 in the Cali area, and one in a different region of the country. His board shares his dream. Furthermore, he wants to pastor a church which is active 24 hours a day.
- **Appearances**: The pastor is convinced that an aesthetically pleasing church facility is necessary and honorable to God. Earlier in his ministry, he and his board were at odds over the remake of the entrance to the church. Adalberto felt strongly that the entrance needed to be redesigned to accommodate the hundreds passing in and out and yet do so with flair and style. The board resigned. Adalberto marched ahead with his plans. Now, in hindsight, the elegant facade fits the appearances of the facility which continues to push out its walls in various projects of expansion. His baptistery, with streaming waterfalls, was designed by a nationally awarded architect who is a member of the church.
- 10. God's Presence: But more than the physical facility, one member testified that the draw for her was the spirit of the presence of God. As I sat (no, stood, throbbed, and gyrated!) throughout that entire service, I held back tears realizing that in this place of infamy and tragedy, God was doing extraordinary things. His presence was palpable and palliative, offering countless personal stories of transformation in a larger community that itself was being transformed.

As I left, I sensed that in this story of credible church growth, there was *CALI-dad*, that is, "quality" from which we all could learn.

SECTION FOUR: Just Where is the Church of the Nazarene anyway with regards to "Compassion?"

Driven by Purpose

World Mission Department Director's Annual Report—Ministry Directors

Former Director: Robert Prescott

Ministry area: Nazarene Compassionate Ministries

Date: November 1, 2003

Evangelistic Events:

NCM partnered with the JESUS Film in 5 countries of central and southern Africa to feed starving families and share Jesus the Hope. As a result, dozens of new congregations were born, including 35 just in the Choma area of Zambia. Over 125,000 people were fed for up to six months in Malawi, Mozambique, Lesotho, Zambia, and Zimbabwe, primarily with corn and beans shipped by the Canadian Food grains Bank.

Important Events:

- NCM is helping the Church enter Iraq, Turkey, Tajikistan, East Timor, North Korea, Equatorial Guinea, and several Creative Access Areas. Over half of the new entries over the past 14 years have been through compassionate ministries and tentmakers.
- More than half of the 4,500 Nazarene churches in Africa are ministering to persons infected with and families affected by HIV/AIDS, including orphans. Over 3,000 pastors and leaders have received the message of abstinence before marriage and fidelity in marriage. Hundreds of churches are providing help to widows, caregivers, and orphans by planting gardens, repairing homes, carrying firewood and water, opening schools for orphans, visiting in the homes of persons sick with AIDS, and countering stigmas and misinformation about the disease and its victims. In Zambia, grants rom the Food Resources Bank are helping 6,000 orphans and their caregivers raise their own food through seed, fertilizer, and tools for family gardens.
- The war in Iraq has created opportunities for Jordanian Nazarenes to minister to refugees
 crossing into Jordan, and send church planters and evangelists into Iraq. Syrian
 Nazarenes are ministering to over 800 refugee families with free health care and food
 donations. In partnership with World Relief, we have placed a construction
 superintendent in northern Iraq who is scouting ministry opportunities and has organized
 several fellowships of Arab converts.
- Nazarene Child Sponsorship started funding child development centers in the Dominican Republic, Brazil (3), the Philippines (2), Thailand, Russia, and Tajikistan, and is seeking 870 sponsors to fund schooling for 2,000 Afghan refugee children in Pakistan.

Stories of Victory:

On their own initiative, Nazarenes in Damascus, Syria sacrificially responded to the
urgent needs of the "strangers in their midst"...refugees of the Middle East conflicts.
With local offerings they opened a clinic and are providing free services and medicines.
They registered 800 families in need and bought food to give them. NCM assisted with

funding for three months, and a private donor generously agreed to fund five more months. This loving response to hurting people has led to scores of commitments, and over 2000 JESUS film videos have been distributed. New believers are growing through weekly discipleship meetings. As these persons return to their home countries, their witness will impact family and friends far and wide.

• Food distribution to 30,000 people, medical clinic for 100 persons a day, elementary schools for 2,000 students, and vocational training for 200 adults per session...all targeted to Afghan refugees in western Pakistan...has resulted in the start of 12 new congregations and an official invitation to take our ministries to Kabul, Afghanistan.

Looking Toward the Future:

The need for finances to support the compassionate outreach of the Church has grown much faster than available resources. Whereas major projects used to be in the \$50,000 to \$100,000 range, now we are facing at least one \$1,000,000 response per year. The drought and continuing famine in Africa, together with the HIV/AIDS pandemic, including millions of orphans, demands a level of resources and funding not possible from within the Church.

For that reason, as of January 2004, Bob Prescott will become the full-time President/CEO of NCM, INC. (NCMI), and Larry Bollinger will take Bob's place as Administrative director of NCM International. NCMI is a separate 501©(3) non-profit corporation registered with the Federal government that is eligible to seek funding outside the Church and enter into partnerships with non-profit organizations.

Financial Statistical Information:

In 2003, giving to the NCM Fund (both restricted and unrestricted) totaled \$2,250,272, comparable to the two prior years. Child sponsorships received \$1,709,286, a steady increase over prior years, as more people learn about the opportunity to nurture a child through Nazarene Child Sponsorship. Comparable levels of funding are expected in 2004.

A major emphasis in 2003, that will continue and expand in 2004, is seeking resources outside the Church to fund and support local ministries of compassion. In 2003, more than \$1.3 million of outside resources were obtained, and this figure is expected to increase substantially in 2004.

"The Skinny on NCM:

A Report by Former Director Robert Prescott" 2003

MISSION:

Nazarene Compassionate Ministries, International, exists to incarnate the holistic ministry of Christ's compassion to the world, meeting physical, emotional, relational, intellectual, and spiritual needs by resourcing, empowering, and enabling a network of individuals and local churches to touch their world in Jesus' name. NCM continues to be the outstretched arm that reaches around the world, connecting the compassionate heart of the Church with thousands of hands that reach out to touch hurting and needy people.

- NCM Intl. is located in the World Mission Department and works primarily with the six World Mission Regions.
- NCM Intl. has no staff in the field; all programs and responses are initiated and administered by regional, field and local personnel.
- NCM Intl. receives and administers voluntary donations from individuals and churches; it has no annual offering and receives no money from the World Evangelism Fund.
- NCM Intl. partners with NMI, NYI, SSM, Nazarene Universities, NTS, the JESUS Film Partnership, and all levels of the WMD to promote compassion as a lifestyle, and to further the evangelistic objectives of the Church.

MINISTRIES:

- **Disaster relief and recovery**. Some responses focus primarily on Nazarene interests; other responses reach out to persons who have never come in contact with the CotN. Every crisis is seen as an opportunity to extend help and bring hope, and ultimately to share the love of Jesus.
- Care and development of children. Three Child Sponsorship programs are assisting almost 60,000 children with feeding, education and vocational training opportunities. The PK (pastor's kid) sponsorship program is unique to the CotN, and is assisting over 3,400 children from kindergarten through high school. Special emphasis is being given to about 2,000 homeless and street children, as well as to thousands of orphans, especially AIDS orphans in Africa. About half of the resources received by NCM are used to help children.
- Holistic community development. NCM Intl. believes in helping people help themselves, in such areas as housing; food production; income generation; water and sanitation; community-based health care; care of infants and small children; opportunities for women and girls; prevention of disease, especially AIDS; and leadership development. We call these activities "Social Transformation".

- Entry to creative access countries. Over the past twelve years, NCM Intl. has been instrumental in opening at least two new countries per year, including several Creative Access Countries (CACs). Recent examples include Kosovo, Macedonia, Turkey, Armenia, Tajikistan and Iraq. Humanitarian assistance and lay tentmakers will be essential as the WMD focuses on the 10-40 Window. Right now we have a construction superintendent working in northern Iraq under assignment to a European evangelical agency; he is scouting opportunities for NCM/CotN ministries.
- Compassionate lifestyles. Every Nazarene is challenged to embody the compassion of Christ. Every local church is encouraged to be a "Good Samaritan Church", with an on-going ministry of compassion to its sphere of influence. Districts and countries are encouraged to form Compassionate Ministry Centers (CMCs) that are legally registered with the government as non-profit agencies of humanitarian assistance. CMCs have the opportunity to access funding and resources beyond the CotN, and can touch a greater number of lives with help and hope.
- Donor relations. NCM Intl. is striving to provide greater accountability to donors, to report
 back on use of funds, and to facilitate response to world crises and other opportunities for
 personal involvement in caring ministries. These include child sponsorships, packing of
 Crisis Care Kits and boxes of used clothing, December as Compassion Month, and support of
 the NCM Fund. NCM Intl. has a user-friendly web site (www.nazcompassion.org), and
 facilitates on-line donations by credit card and checking account debits.

FUNDING:

- For 2004, NCM Intl. estimates it will receive \$2,000,000 for child sponsorships and \$2,000,000 for the NCM Fund, including restricted gifts. NCM and Nazarene Child Sponsorships are approved 10% mission specials.
- NCM Intl. is a self-funded entity, in that the General Treasurer's Office sets aside 20% of all donations to cover administrative expenses. NCM does not receive direct support from the WEF, but benefits greatly from access to the World Mission in-place "delivery system" across 146 world areas.
- Twenty percent (20%) of all undesignated donations for compassionate ministries is turned over to the US/Canada office of NCM for use in North America.
- NCM Intl. seeks resources and partnership opportunities with other evangelical agencies so
 as to leverage Nazarene donations. Recent partners include World Concern, World Relief,
 Convoy of Hope, Heart-to-Heart, Humedica of Germany, Helping Hands of Germany, and
 the Canadian Food Grains Bank.
- NCM Intl. is resourced by NCM, Incorporated, a separate non-profit entity registered in 1990 to seek resources outside the CotN. NCMInc., receives over \$200,000 per year of payroll deduction donations through United Way and the Combined Federal Campaign, is registered

with the USAID, and partners with NGOs who prefer not to deal directly with the Church. NCMInc., devotes half of its payroll contributions to fund Nazarene Disaster Response (NDR) and other compassionate ministries here in the USA. NCMInc., also handles all gifts-in-kind for NCM, Intl., and ships over \$2.5 million a year of clothing, Crisis Care Kits, medical supplies, computers, and disaster relief supplies each year.

And You Are to Blame!

I've just received several pages of statistics about the Church of the Nazarene. In these figures, there are some shocking facts about the composite make-up of the denomination over the last decade! Radical things are happening! And you are to blame! Please 'fess up, and take some responsibility.

You are to blame for the fact that in ten years, our "Zion" has grown by 46% or almost 450,000 new members!

You are to blame for the "browning" of our church, with over 80% of our gains coming from our overseas missions! You missionaries and national workers bear the brunt of responsibility, but you prayers, contributors, Work and Witness teams, Youth in Missions kids, and a host of other crazy programs and excuses for evangelism that you've concocted, share the blame.

In the past ten years, you've marched into 43 new world areas, now with ministry in 135 countries. Don't you know that not everybody will embrace you, and that what you are doing is risky, dangerous, and out of this world?

And you, 4,000 new elders, deacons and licensed pastors added to the rolls in the last ten years, you have now shown up, demanding placement and work. What are we to do with you? Where are your teachers, preachers and Sunday school types who stirred passions, preached services and agitated your poor souls until you wanted nothing other than to serve Jesus? Have them stand up and acknowledge their blame!

Neither are you doctors, nurses, and medical personnel exempt from responsibility. You have been out there bandaging wounds, nursing bodies, salving pain, as though you could stave off the inevitable. What right do you have to interfere with the decaying process of things? And you disaster relief specialists, what audacity drives you to think that your finger, stuck in the dike of human tragedy, really makes a difference? And the poor folks back home who fund you, couldn't they do something better with their money? Golfing doesn't come cheap, you know.

You educators, holed up in your six-dozen or more seminaries, universities, colleges, and Bible institutes, there is no absolution for you. You have indoctrinated minds, warmed souls, propelled careers, until it is getting completely out of hand—7,000 more students than just a decade ago. Under your training, they might aspire to rise up some day and take over.

And, Nazarene Publishing House, with your increased productively, your books and music, you litter our homes with stuff that fills our minds, possesses our spirits, and consumes our time. Why don't you let us be, snuggled up so warmly to our TVs?

And you culprits at the World Literature Ministries plodding away at your translations, now in 90 languages worldwide, don't you realize that if the whole world would learn English, we'd all be better off?

You young people! You are especially out of control. With your raucous bands and your Jesus cheers, ten thousand of you invaded Toronto. Then, a second wave of you hit Indianapolis, painting, cleaning up, such a nuisance to the status quo. Beware, Houston! In 2003, they've set their designs on you.

And you women! You insist on being called into full-time Christian ministry. Nazarene Theological Seminary now has 35% of its first-year class preparing to pastor churches, lead compassionate ministries, teach theology. What happened to aprons, home-cooked food, and subservience?

Ah, thinking about it further, you are not even the penultimate cause of the problem. God got the thing started with his penchant for making things, then handing out free will. Jesus personified it by intruding where others thought he didn't belong. The Holy Spirit energized it with his attempt to whitewash away the ugliness of it all. The Church tried to enact it by breaking molds and setting up new structures. And you, with your persistent obedience and faithfulness, have carried it through to some dangerous extremes, actually living out your faith.

I don't know where it's going to go from here. Maybe with time, the whole bunch of you will be out of here.

But in the meantime, thank God, you are to blame!

Lay People Don't Lie Down!

Reprinted from Holiness Today, December 2002, by Fletcher L. Tink

With our new PR sensitivities, I'm always getting tongue-tied trying to figure out if *laymen* is generic for both sexes, or do we nuance it with *laywomen*? Am I being especially sensitive if I use *layperson* or *lay people*? Or are these words one or two or just hyphenated? And how did the word *man* get in there in the first place? Just where do we get this word *layman* from, anyway? My word spell check on the computer doesn't pick it up anyway. *Webster's* does and indicates that *layman* is from *laity* which is from the Greek *laos*, meaning "the people"—ordinary people, in contradistinction from the "professionals."

Aren't all of us a composite of the *priesthood of all believers*, as Martin Luther once said? According to the Church of the Nazarene (and most others), there is a clear demarcation between the "professional clergy" and "laity" of the Church. Special orders, commissioning, and authority are invested into those called to full-time ministry and equipped with the gifts and graces required for their particular assignment.

But hold off a second! These people are not just "ordinary." There is a rumbling in the ranks where, since the beginning, the lay leadership of the Church has been recasting the denomination in its own image.

It started back in 1915 when Ada Glidden Bresee and Susan Fitkin, one lay and one ordained, stirred Nazarenes into organizing the **Women's Missionary Society**, which has since been reshaped into the major support chain for the missionary enterprise now known as **Nazarene Missions International**. And from the beginning of the church, there has been the ongoing influence of the Sunday School movement, always lay-driven.

It resurfaced when the Nazarene Student Leadership Conference of 1966, taking its cue from the U.S. Peace Corps and the Mormon missionary youth movement, recommended that the General Church mobilize its youth to short-term missionary service. Paul Skiles, a layman and General Secretary of the NYPS, had earlier entered into an alliance with the Department of World Mission and commissioned fourteen **Nazarene Evangelistic Ambassadors** from the seven Nazarene colleges into evangelistic forays in Third World countries beginning in 1964 and repeated in 1966 and 1969. These efforts later coalesced into the **Student Mission Corps**, now known as **Youth in Mission**, a summer program for student engagement in ministry around the world. It has now sent around 2,500 young people around the world on 6-week ministry engagements since 1969.

In the mid 1970's, there was a concerted effort to engage men in missions. Paul Gamertsfelder, an optometrist, organized and mobilized **Men in Missions** to visit various fields and perform practical tasks of construction, architectural consultation, medical services, and evangelism. In time, the program was formalized and expanded into what is now known as **Work and Witness**, with over 6,000 teams, 100,000 individuals and almost 4,000 years of volunteer service offered over its 28 year history.

With the growing involvement of lay people in Work and Witness, many volunteers were so captivated by the meaning of their experience that they sought immediate opportunities to continue in lay missionary service. Out of that pressure, **Nazarenes in Volunteer Service** was begun, offering one-year stints to serve abroad for people who could raise their own resources. Some became national directors of Work and Witness teams. Others utilized their agricultural, teaching, and medical skills. From this new pool of cross-culturally experienced lay people has subsequently come many of our current career missionaries.

The famine of 1974 in Haiti and the earthquake in Guatemala two years later galvanized media attention. Unsolicited contributions started pouring into Kansas City headquarters designated for those two disasters, resulting in a substantial internal debate about the priorities of the Church. These funds came from the laity who, rather than wanting to send dollars to parachurch organizations, felt that the better conduit would be the Church of the Nazarene. The General Church's response was to organize the **Hunger Fund**. Some years later, the **Nazarene Hunger and Disaster Fund** emerged and was given special mission status. By 1983, over three quarters of a million dollars was being contributed annually, and Steve Weber, missionary to Haiti, was recruited to supervise allotments and projects.

At first, there was the feeling that any monies dispersed would be assigned to needy Nazarene recipients. This had worked for Haiti and Guatemala, but with the tragic Ethiopian famine of the early 80's and the Mexico City earthquake of 1985, a shift took place that saw **Compassionate Ministries** as a wedge into lesser-developed countries where church-planting missionaries could not obtain visas. When the Berlin Wall collapsed in 1989, the Church was already poised to take advantage of the open doors in former Soviet bloc countries that could embrace a variety of holistic ministries.

As of 1985, the name of the office was changed to Nazarene Compassionate Ministries and took on a dual-pronged approach. Nazarene Compassionate Ministries USA/Canada, under the guidance of director Tom Nees, was separated out from the international program in the recognition of regional economic and cultural distinctiveness. Later, Nazarene Compassionate Ministries, Inc., was created to broker finances and resources that did not come directly into the Church of the Nazarene but that would service the USA/Canada as well as the international wing of NCM. Much of this bounty resulted from gifts-in-kind. This historical narrative illustrates the denominational response to a bottom-up movement of laypersons who, seeing human need, demanded that the Church become responsive to human need worldwide.

One of the early leaders and current director of **Nazarene Compassionate Ministries**, **International**, is Robert Prescott, a layman, who served previously for many years as an official of the U.S. Housing and Urban Development Agency.

By 1985, the Nazarene Student Leadership Conference again pressed the Church into action, volunteering to serve in the midst of the devastation brought about by civil war in Mozambique. Because of the dangers posed there, NCM diverted the student body presidents to relief efforts in Guatemala. Thus began a year later what is now the **C.A.U.S.E.** (**College and University Students Serving and Enabling**) program. C.A.U.S.E. is organized on the campus level and offers an introductory 7-10 day team engagement in compassionate and Work and Witness

projects during spring and early summer vacations. Each year, one or two countries are selected, and over the 15-year history, 1,500 students have become C.A.U.S.E. volunteers in 15 countries and world areas. A Kansas City businessman, Kevin Garber, once a C.A.U.S.E. volunteer himself, administrates this program.

Heart-to-Heart, International, was organized in 1992 by medical doctor Gary Morsch, who has served on the NCM, Inc., board. Though not directly connected with the Church of the Nazarene, the organization has partnered with other organizations and resources well beyond evangelical circles and performs a wide variety of relief and development services not yet available within the NCM program. Yet Heart to Heart has worked most effectively to open access for ministry of the Church of the Nazarene in places that want no formal ties with the denomination. It was Heart-to-Heart that spun off the **One Heart—Many Hands** initiative that mobilized volunteers by the thousands to do practical service projects during the last three General Assemblies in San Antonio and Indianapolis.

In 1975, a group of Nazarene doctors and dentists formed the **Nazarene Action Fellowship**. In 1985, it was officially reorganized as the **Nazarene Medical-Dental Fellowship** and, given the need to expand to include all healthcare professionals, changed its charter in 1988 to become **Nazarene Health Care Fellowship**. Through the years, these medical professionals, currently 1,800 in the U.S. and 400 internationally, have donated medicines and equipment to mission hospitals and clinics, provided short-term personnel for various assignments, collaborating with Nazarene Compassionate Ministries and the World Mission Department in many locations worldwide. On average, 6-10 medical teams are assigned abroad annually, representing 10,000 hours of professional volunteer service each year.

In the mid 1980's, Marge Osborne, a housewife in Toronto, Canada, in a personal epiphany felt God calling her to develop an urban evangelistic initiative in her metropolitan area. She soon assumed responsibility as director of **Thrust to the City** locally, inspiring the Canadian leadership to develop a wide variety of innovative ministries, both church plants and compassionate ministries, in ways that have served as a model for the dozen or so metropolitan areas selected subsequently for their own "Thrusts."

In 1997, several Nazarene lay persons who had been contributing large sums of money to Campus Crusade for the *JESUS* Film Project, approached founder Bill Bright about the possibility of utilizing Nazarene delivery and follow-up systems for this major evangelistic thrust. World Mission Department Director, Louie Bustle, immediately responded by coalescing a group of these patrons, and forming a board called **Harvest Partners** that currently funds 387 teams world-wide that have presented over 40,000 showings of the film with 12 million attendees, with 1.8 million respondents to the gospel. More than 600,000 persons have chosen to attend at least the following discipleship session. Harvest Partners has set a goal of 10 million converts, 10,000 new churches, and 10,000 new pastors by the year 2010.

This lay-driven initiative, following this trajectory, promises to redefine the Church of the Nazarene in terms of needs, priorities, and balance of power. This crush of new converts, often illiterate and impoverished, come from the poorest countries of the world. Yet with the bloom of conversion, the need for training, and their yearning for minimal security in life, these new

Nazarenes will need those from the more privileged nations of the world to come alongside them in numbers well beyond those that the current professional clergy can sustain.

One Nazarene leader recently commented that the lay movement in the denomination is turning the Church upside down. It has reconfigured priorities, opened new channels of resource and need, and generated energies and resources in quantities never anticipated.

The phrase now in vogue is "total mobilization of the laity"—not as a buzzword, but as a driving philosophy of the Church at large.

Added to these lay-driven opportunities are a whole range of non-clerical collaborations: the Association of Nazarenes in Social Research, the Association of Nazarene Building Professionals, Nazarene Aviation Fellowship, Nazarene International Education Association, the Nazarene Credit Union, and district and regional lay retreats—all energized to serve specific needs and enhance ministry of lay persons throughout the Church.

Convinced? Lay people don't lie down! At least not in the Church of the Nazarene! They stand tall, flexing their muscles, clearing their throats, dreaming their dreams, and reforming the institution. And the kingdom of God is greatly enhanced by their effort.

The President, the Prince and the Mother

Christmas creates mothers as often as it births children! Yet the most famous mother of the twentieth century never bore children in the Christmas way.

1994

It is a wintry morning, the frosty winds flay at shadowy figures as they hasten around the concrete corners of urban Washington, DC, towards the elegant Shoreham Hotel. Yet even the frigidity fades in the heightened anticipation that fills the frosty air.

Mother Teresa of Calcutta is in town to address the National Prayer Breakfast, that annual celebratory event that congregates three thousand leaders and diplomats from 100 nations, in pursuit of religious unity and moral concern. This year, I am the blessed recipient of a free pass, and want to see how this icon of compassionate ministry will dance between the power brokers and her passions. I even hope to pray.

The esteemed visitor, sits alone, distanced from the head table of the great, including the President, the Vice President, members of the Senate and House of Representatives, sampling her spartan meal, her diminutive form lost in the local trappings. After prayers and plaudits, she makes her way to the podium, pulls out her manuscript, and disappears behind the microphone which, from a distance, seems to engulf her.

Later I learn that, for the first time, the keynote speaker fails to recite the customary acknowledgements of the luminaries present. Instead, this 84 year-old woman dives into her speech with the intensity of an Olympic competitor.

Her accent is awkward, her reading, ponderous, her bearing, bent. But her message is straight and pointed, affirming life as sacred in all of its forms. We hear that "love always hurts," that "it hurt Jesus to love us. . . and that we are to put on Christ." We are told that ". . . that the unborn child has been carved in the hand of God from conception, and is called by God to love and to be loved. . .forever." We learn that in her children's home in Calcutta, over 3,000 children had been saved from abortion. We are provoked by the thought that ". . . if we accept that a mother can kill even her own child, how can we tell other people not to kill one another?"

This Mother Superior of Missionaries of Charity shares her view of the poor. They are "very great people. They can teach us so many beautiful things." One of the men that her ministry serves, once told her: "I have lived like an animal in the street, but am going to die like an angel." Then, after the sisters had removed the worms off of his body, all he said was, "Sister, I'm going home to God," and therewith died.

We are reminded that "love begins at home, and it is not how much we do, but how much love we put into what we do."

Part of the poignancy of the moment is watching the powerful squirm in their seats at the unfoiled message that slices across the grain of political sentiment. The crowd spontaneously applauds and cheers, not once, but three times.

In turn, both the President and the Vice President rise to make responses. The one testifies that he feels, in this moment, as if he is a new acquisition in the NBA, suited up for his first professional basketball game as a Chicago Bull. At the end of the game, the reporter asks how he feels playing in his first game, hitting his single bucket. "Man," he says enthusiastically, "It's a great feeling knowing that between Michael Jordan and me, we've scored 52 points."

The other offers similar commentary. "In this moment I feel like the rookie who has been benched all season, finally to be thrown in by the coach to play the final ten seconds of a championship game, ahead by one point. The ball is passed in my direction, I hear the coach screaming, 'Don't lose it, just hang onto it, Dooooon't lose it!!!

In their anecdotes, they admit their feelings of inferiority in the face of moral character, not simply on what has been said but on who the speaker has been. In the spotlight of humble service, they know their contributions pale in the presence of rare spiritual authority.

1995

A Prince visits Mother Teresa at the Mother House in Calcutta---General Superintendent William Prince. He has stepped aside from his administrative responsibilities to accompany Dr. Gary Morsch, (whose organization, Heart-to Heart, has contributed large quantities of medicinal supplies to Missionaries of Charity) for a private meeting with Mother Teresa.

Up on the second floor, Mother chats with the Nazarenes. Dr. Prince expresses appreciation for her presentation made at the Prayer Breakfast, seen earlier on CSPAN. "Do you have a copy of it?" she asks, volunteering a hard copy. "Why do Americans kill so many of their babies?" she queries. "Because sin brings this into the lives of people," responds the G.S. The nun sadly concurs. They talk about the Nazarene compassionate programs in India. She is quite aware of the Reynolds Memorial Hospital in Washim and wants to know more about the doctrine of the Church of the Nazarene. "We preach redemption and righteousness" is the visitor's response, "The only hope for the world is in Jesus Christ."

Mother Teresa clasps Dr Prince's hands, looks deep into his eyes and affirms, "It is true, **the only hope is in Jesus Christ!**" They then pray together, a world-acclaimed saint pleading for God's blessings on the ministry of the Church of the Nazarene.

2003

I find myself in Calcutta. Is it the <u>City of Joy</u>, made famous by Dominique La Pierre in the fictional account of a slum of Calcutta? Is it the exotic world of a raunchy musical of a generation ago that used its name? Or is it a grimy urban mass where millions live and die on the streets with minimal hope? One travel guide written by locals, entitles its most hopeful chapter as "Decay as an Art Form."

I discover that it is none of these, just a huge, hurting city suffering indignities not unlike what I see in downtown Los Angeles, or in the Anacostia district of Washington, DC.

I do volunteer services in three of Mother Teresa's seven homes, in Nirmal Hridoy Manzil where the poor and the destitute spend their last moments, in Prem Dan where the indigent sick are attended, and in Daya Dan where 75 severely handicapped children reside. In the first home, I sing, "Alleluia" to a young teen whose body has been burned by a dad intent on sacrifice by pouring acid on him. Tears stream from his eyes as he moans, "I want to go home." There, two of my charges die of tuberculosis the night I serve them. In Prem Dan, I watch as courageous volunteers pick away the rotted flesh on the remnants of fingers and toes, eaten by leprosy.

However, with the children, I find myself transformed into a child, for those who will never fully mature. I make faces; I color; I sing; I act crazy, just to entice giggles from the placid face of a child locked in autism. Gone is my sophistication. In a world where only love, slapstick and service communicate, I become a child, yearning with them for a mother.

I pick up the little ones and carry their damaged selves to their cribs. I rub their legs, console their fears.

In that moment, I, so much the Western male, feel mothering instincts growing within me. That repressed side, desiring to nurture and be nurtured, converge at the manger of Christ. This Christmas, it is not just the holy infant that I celebrate, but a mother, who in her total surrender, has helped me see sorry Calcutta flamed by the star of Bethlehem.

A Wesleyan Theology of Salvation and Social Liberation

By Timothy L. Smith

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(A paper presented to the Caribbean Nazarene Regional Conference)

Many argue that Christianity does not offer a solution to the social problems of the modern age. They insist that Christian reformers, acting on biblical principles, must accept an alliance with systems of thought based on human experience, whether Marxist, Rastafarian, or Voodoo. That is not true, at least for Wesleyans. Granted, the Bible is not primarily a book on social or economic policy, and "liberty" means something quite different to Christians and Jews than it does to the secular world. But any person who suggests that God's Word does not reveal divine care and concern in this present world for the poor and oppressed is libeling the God of love whom we call Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

The gospel of salvation and social liberation that we proclaim rests, first of all, upon a *scriptural analysis* of the condition of the poor. Poverty and the oppression and injustice that both the Bible and human experience tell us often accompany it stem from the rebellion of human beings against God. That rebellion is shared by men and women, rich and poor, learned and unlearned, whether they are white, black, or brown, and without regard to their places of origin on this planet. We all were there in the Fall. We are akin in sin. And we all may come together at the Cross, be joined together as living members of Christ's' Body, and be empowered by the Holy Spirit to build new lives of love and holiness for ourselves, and a kingdom of God for all humankind.

Moreover, the Word of God teaches that the oppression and exploitation of the poor is a persistent temptation to all those who have wealth or power. On this the Hebrew Scriptures are plainly in full agreement with the New Testament. Moses warned all Israel of that exploitation in the Book of Deuteronomy, the prophet Amos made ringing declarations against it, and Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Ezekiel promised that the Messianic Age would deliver all of us from it.

This scriptural analysis, furthermore, deplores the tendency of both those who have much of this world's goods and those who have little to defer any righting of the balance until the Second Coming. Our religion's ethical judgment upon exploitation as it is practiced now forbids this deferral of doing right until that great day. The gospel is set to deliver us from all sin, now, including any willing participation in social or economic evil. In my country, a burst of millenarianism in both North and South 150 years ago undergirded an appeal that human slavery be accepted as a necessary evil in the present age. When Jesus appeared, these persons professed to believe, the proper time to strike the chains of bondage from persons of color would come. By contrast, those who believed we must join our efforts to the unseen ones of the Holy Spirit to prepare a Kingdom for the King stood against slavery, at last violently, it turned out. And the bloodiest war in human history until that date left a heritage of betterness that even now has not fully gone away. If those whose social hopes were in Christ had followed His methods of love and forgiveness toward evildoers, they would have raised taxes to buy the Negroes their freedom and brought reconciliation to our land. So, today, in the Caribbean; we must contend with the powers of darkness in high places, but with weapons that are Christ, not carnal. And always we must put our hopes in the god of kindliness and mercy.

Secondly, Wesleyan religion, like that of the Early Church, preaches the biblical promises to the poor. Those promises are both individual and social, temporal and eternal. When Jesus appeared after His baptism at the synagogue in His home city, Nazareth, He asked for the scroll of Isaiah's prophecy and said that the passage in Isaiah 61 was now fulfilled before their very eyes (Luke 4:18-21).

When George Whitefield and John Wesley set out to revive primitive Christianity in 18th-century England, they kept before them both the Christian ideology (that Christ's kingdom was to spread over the whole earth) and the Christian ethic (that pure and undefiled religion was to care for the widows and orphans and keep oneself unspotted from the world).

Wesley's first church building in London, the Old Foundery, was located outside the walls of the city among the *barrios*, the shantytowns where the poor people lived. So was the beautiful chapel he later built three blocks away. His habit in moments of great spiritual blessing was to celebrate liberation from the love of money by calling for the collection plates to be passed to enable the congregation to buy wool and flax to give to poor widows to spin. When he decided he should be married, as Frank Baker's recent complete edition of Wesley's correspondence makes plain, he chose Grace Murray, a godly but poor person. She had proved her mettle both socially and spiritually, among the unemployed working people of Newcastle upon Tyne. The long correspondence revealing John Wesley's deep sorrow and forgiving love of those who fetched her away from him because she was an impoverished commoner reveals the completeness of Wesley's identification with the poor.

The same expression of perfect love characterized the Church of the Nazarene's founding generation. The oldest congregation in what became the Pentecostal Church of the Nazarene was organized at Providence, R.I. It was founded after the Methodist pastor and bishop refused to extend recognition to the mission to poor people that Fred Hillary and others had carried on. J.O. McClurkan, founder of Trevecca College and leader of the congregations in Tennessee that later became Nazarene but were then called the Pentecostal Mission, spent his lifetime lifting broken and poor people in East Nashville from the degradation and despair that sin had helped fasten upon them. Little wonder that when Phineas Bresee and other moderately well-off Methodists went "out under the stars" to found the California wing of the Nazarene denomination, he announced and carried on throughout his lifetime a church that would minister daily to both the bodies and souls of persons captive to sin.

It is so, today in Haiti, thanks in part to the role of missionaries and national leaders. Nazarene Compassionate Ministries, spreading from those who have responded to needs in this land and those of our other brothers and sisters in the Caribbean, are crying, "Justice," all over the world. The promise of salvation we preach to the poor is both social and spiritual. In the Body of Christ it is not right to withhold anything that is wholesome and liberating from a person in need.

Finally, the ways in which the Wesleyan form of salvation theology gives hope to the oppressed needs careful reiteration. Its substance can be summarized in five points, an honorable number in Christian thought.

- 1. Temporal as well as eternal hope rests, in our view upon the experience of sanctification. That experience, as Wesley never tired of saying, begins in the new birth, or regeneration, and continues daily as the Holy Spirit teaches us from the Scripture how to walk in Christlikeness. It comes to a second climax, a "second blessing properly so-called," in the experience of cleansing from all that is properly called sin. But far from stopping there, as Wesley was wont to say, loving God with all our hearts enables us daily to deal with our human shortcomings, face up to our prejudices and long-held errors of judgment, and continually reexamine our ethical lives in the light of the glory that shines from the face of Jesus Christ. The result, of course, is power to live in ever-increasing holiness, to be daily delivered from the enervating effects of evil makes us better and more useful employees, more efficient in the use of our time, and triumphant over all those things that keep poor individuals from making the most of their lives. Such Christian liberation makes us better in our studies, in social relationships, in fellowship with other Christians, and in all aspects of our economic live. Alcohol, tobacco, marijuana, cocaine, and even the excessive use of harmless drugs like caffeine and sugar pose no threat to the well-being of such a redeemed person.
- 2. Christian prophets, whether laypersons or ministers, must recognize and challenge social or structural injustice wherever it appears. The poor are not oppressed simply by their sins but by an exploitative society. To face up to social wrong—unfair wages, desperate housing conditions, the reign of ignorance and deference to the idols of race or class or nationalism—is the obligation of every Christian. In both word and action we must resist evil, but always in loving willingness to turn the other cheek, go a second mile, and give our cloak to the one that demands our coat.
- 3. Another facet of Wesleyan liberation thought is deliverance from the terrible consequences of violence. The peaceableness of Jesus is as much our joy and duty to imitate as His courageous opposition to social sin. In Samaria long ago, beside a well, He spoke with both firmness and compassion to an immoral divorcée of a despised race. And He spoke the same way to the money changers in the house of the Lord. This righteousness and compassion, not a rope woven hastily of little cords, were the real symbols of His authority that day.
- 4. We are taught and enabled to rely upon the Holy Spirit's refusal to compromise in any way with discrimination on account of race or sex or national origin, with injustice done by those who for the moment hold political, economic, or military power over other persons; or with the covetousness, the greed, of both rich and poor. Deliverance of the oppressed from such evils in God's Deliverance of the oppressed from such evils is God's Deliverance of the oppressed form such evils is God's will, however slowly and incompletely we His creatures, including Christians, have managed to follow that will.
- 5. We Wesleyans, finally, hold that after all the good that we can do is done, life in this world will still often be unfair. Job discovered this fact long ago. The real argument in that book was not between Job and his miserable comforters or Job and his wife, but between the man on the ash heap and God. His wife, indeed, realized that fact and said in so many words that if there was trouble between Job and God, she believed in her husband, and God was wrong. His Heavenly Father, however, taught Job that despite the general rule that good persons are better off even in this life than if they had been bad, those who love God with all their hearts sometimes suffer unbearably. At such times, as all the race knows, their only recourse is a vision of our eternal Redeemer standing in the

latter day upon the earth and the assurance that with our own eyes we shall see Him and not another. He is Lord. The King is coming. *Maranatha*.

Christians stand in wonder and thanksgiving before this vision. It is not an opiate, not simply pie in the sky. It is, at bottom, a far wiser estimate of human realities than either Marxism or the social gospel or professedly Catholic liberation theology ever thought of. It combines in the Christian's gaze faith, hope, and love. That love will outlast both faith and hope. It is eternal.

Mixing Bed Partners and Cords

I find some of the strangest verses of scripture to be "no nonsense" practical. One such passage is tucked away in Ecclesiastes 4:11-12: "If you sleep alone, you won't have anyone to keep you warm on a cold night. Someone might be able to beat up one of you, but two can defend themselves. As the saying goes, 'A rope made from three strands of cord is hard to break."

It is hard for us to understand these anachronistic analogies, given 21st central heating technology. Or perhaps the meaning is undermined by a perverse reading of the text which interprets intimacy and closeness solely in sexual terms.

Surely, we don't need help to protect ourselves, because firearms compensate so efficiently. And nylon cord has supplanted multiple strands of fragile ones.

In other words, "more" is confusing and confining. We believe we can go it alone. Forget fighting over sheets, tripping over bodyguards, and winding thread. Technology overcomes redundancy.

With regard to mission and Christian evangelism, North America—primarily the United States—has been viewed as a resource dispenser while much of the rest of the world is seen as a consumer. Thankfully, the tables are turning. Korea and Brazil are two countries that now churn out thousands of missionaries for service elsewhere, breaking the stereotype that only Western Whites have the answers.

The denominational offices of Nazarene Compassionate Ministries, International, have done a superb job of mobilizing resources for the needs of many nations of the world. Twenty percent of undesignated funds are redirected to the needs of North America, through the office of NCM USA/Canada, though 90% of the income is generated from that geographical source.

However, a new phenomenon is developing. Taking a page from the North American experience, numerous countries are setting up their own national or regional Compassionate Ministries programs. NCM has affiliates in Canada, the United Kingdom, and Japan. In Germany, their NCM-equivalent is called Helping Hands. Africa has a continental-sized Helping Hands, with national spin-offs in development. Holland's goes by the name Compassio Mundi. Other CM organizations are also in various embryonic stage in other countries.

There are various advantages to this current development:

It is a testimony of **increased concern** for one's national neighbor. For example, the Brits have a long history of involvement with their former colonies and Commonwealth countries and desire to service them, along with some of the former Soviet States.

2. It is a testimony of **expanded resources**. National churches have increased capacity not only to share of their wealth, but also to tap into other resources that may come from local foundations, corporations, and government arrangements.

It is a testimony of **efficient application** of resources, as these national churches, rather than sending monies to the United States for disbursement, choose to manage their own funding according to their priorities.

4, It is a testimony to new **political realities**. There are times when resources, identified as U.S.-derived, may be inhibited because of political conflicts and hostilities. To have agencies located and resourced in other parts of the world opens up options for delivery and partnerships that could not occur if all resources were Kansas City, USA, generated.

Furthermore, NCM partners with a plethora of non-Nazarene organizations who either offer the Church additional resources or become conduits for delivery of care where the Church has limited access. Some examples of these partner organizations include: the American Red Cross, Christian Service Charities, Convoy of Hope, Heart to Heart International, HUMEDICA, Love, Inc., World Concern, World Relief, World Hope, and World Vision.

For instance, in partnership with HUMEDICA of Germany, food and blankets were provided to 5,000 earthquake victims in Usulutan, El Salvador. In Mozambique, Bangladesh, and India, HUMEDICA has partnered with NCM by sending medical teams, medicines, and supplies. In Nicaragua, NCM, in partnership with Convoy of Hope, sent 40,000 lbs. of rice to northern Nicaragua because of drought. Canadian Foodgrains Bank with NCM delivered 833 tons of wheat flour, cooking oil, and beans to Peshawar, Pakistan, to meet the needs of 6,000 Afghan refugee families.

In this precarious world, where friends become enemies so casually, where protecting the poor can make one so vulnerable, where the tether of communication can snap at the whim of a demagogue, it is such a positive development to see that the compassion ethos of the Church of the Nazarene now has a strong array of bed partners and strengthened cords that can access care in a thousand creative directions.

Pentecostalism and Compassion

Reprinted from *Holiness Today*, April 2000, by Fletcher L. Tink

Wherever I go, it seems that Pentecostalism is licking at the heels of Nazarene self-identity. Let me explain.

The Church of the Nazarene has held as its cardinal tenet the infilling of the Holy Spirit which cleanses the inner person from the carnal nature, the "double-mind," and empowers one for service. The quintessential expression of this is I Corinthians 13's "perfect love" which casts out all fear. As John Wesley, our theological mentor, describes it as "loving the Lord, our God, with all of our heart, mind, soul, and body and our neighbor as ourselves" (Luke 10:26-28).

Pentecostalism, on the other hand, focuses upon the "baptism of the Holy Spirit" as evidenced by gifts, primarily the gift of tongues as its principle manifestation. I find it ironic that the term "Pentecostal" is used, in that this focal phenomenon is clearly not what is described on the day of Pentecost. As I read it, the miracle was in the hearing and not in the speaking as people heard in the multiple human languages present at Peter's address. And, unlike the Corinthian description, there was no need for the gift of "interpretation" (I Corinthians 12).

Yet, Dr Bresee, major architect of the Church of the Nazarene, was entirely wrong when he predicted that the Azusa Street revival of 1906 was only a flash in the pan that would quickly be extinguished. Its influence has been profound and worldwide and has shown us both authentic Christianity as well as excess and deviation. The more recent "Charismatic" movement from the 1950's on has offered us a variation on the theme, with less dogmatism in that it stresses a variety of gifts and does not necessarily tie those gifts to the "baptism of the Holy Spirit." As such, its appeal has slipped into many mainline denominations.

Both Pentecostalism and the Charismatic movement dominate the religious airways and the media with their fervor and sensationalism. Young Christians, especially in the Third World, are often lulled into seeing only this form of Christianity. Not comprehending nuances of theology and practice new Nazarenes can become conflicted in this theological understanding.

Recently, I came across a passage written by Dr. Peter Wagner, noted church growth specialist and my former professor and colleague. He himself leans theologically towards the Pentecostal camp and personally speaks in tongues. In his 1980 book, <u>Your Spiritual Gifts can Help Your Church Grow</u>, he says:

"I was privileged to speak on spiritual gifts and church growth to virtually all the district superintendents of the Church of the Nazarene, as fine a roomful of Christian leaders that one could find. It so happens that the Church of the Nazarene is thoroughly convinced as a denomination that tongues is a gift which ought not be practiced in churches today. My advice to them was to interpret their position on spiritual gifts as from God and to stick to it.

Perhaps no two churches or denominations need the same gift mix. God has given the Church of the Nazarene a gift mix different from that of the Assemblies of God, the Seventh-Day Adventists, and the Christian and Missionary Alliance. If their mix has been determined by God,

he can and will bless them, as long as they decide to discover, develop and use their gifts that they feel God has given to them. Nothing else is necessary. They would be unwise to spend the time and energy required to battle through a change in their philosophy of ministry (82)."

I find Wagner's position sane and sensible. The Church of the Nazarene predates the Pentecostal movement and believed its purpose was to "Christianize Christianity." That is, it understood "love" to be the central element of the life of the sanctified believer.

Ironically, it was a Presbyterian commentator William Barclay, who alerted me to the fact that all the great creeds, the Nicean, the Chalcedon, the Westminster Confession, and so forth, completely ignored the characteristic of "love" in God and that it was not until the Wesleyan Awakening that "love", agape love, was seen as the core component of God's being.

So what then is the "gift mix" of the Church of the Nazarene as Wagner might have us identify it?

I believe it to be found in the special operations of the Holy Spirit, in an infilling that both cleanses and empowers us. Unlike the Calvinists who believe only in imputed grace, we believe in "imparted" grace in that sin is expelled from our nature by the invading presence of "divine love." As Charles Wesley expressed it: "Love Divine, all loves excelling, Joy of heaven to earth come down. Fix in us thy humble dwelling" God resides in us in all of His fullness. Hence, His character of love, so also in us dwells.

Therefore the culmination of gifts expressed in I Corinthians 12 and 14 is the gift of holy love described so poetically in I Corinthians 13. Yes, agape love is fruit of the Spirit; but it is also a gift, one made available to all holy Christians. Nazarenes, if they believe their doctrine and engage it in practical living, should be the most compassionate of all Christians.

But what else constitutes our possible gift mix? Here, I believe, we have the opportunity for a complete identity that converges with our "Compassion as a Lifestyle" history. Peter Wagner describes 27 gifts. Among these he identifies the following: *Service, Exhortation* (encouraging), *Giving* (contributing, generosity, sharing) and *Mercy* (sympathy, comforting the sorrowing, showing kindness), all identified in Romans 12. From I Corinthians 12 he adds *Healing* (doing great deeds) and Helps. In Ephesians 4 he includes *Evangelism*. Elsewhere he catalogues *Voluntary Poverty*

(I Corinthians 13:3) *Martyrdom* (I Corinthians 13:13), *Hospitality* (I Peter 4:10), *Intercession and Missionary*.

Wow! It would seem to me that in our gestures of compassion we have a full plate of gifts through which we can express holy love!

As I work in Compassionate Ministries I see these gifts taking off in incredible ways to and around worldwide locations with both power and poise. There is no need to reconfigure ourselves to some other theological image. What we have been given requires us to be good stewards of our heritage and calling using the gifts already mandated to us both individually and as a denomination.

Interview with Larry Bollinger

By Mindy Bowne Hancock

Recently I had the opportunity to interview Larry Bollinger, Administrative Director of NCM. I asked him about his family, his education, his move to NCM, and his vision for this office.

Larry and Lynne have three children, a boy aged 6, a girl aged 2, and a newborn boy. Larry grew up in Quincy, Massachusetts where is father was the Vice President of Finance for Eastern Nazarene College where Larry earned his bachelor's degree in business. He went on to earn his master's degree in third world economic development at Eastern University in Philadelphia.

I asked Larry to talk about some people who had influenced him. He told me that he was inspired by the teachings and writings of Ron Sider, Robert Linthicum, and Tony Campolo. While he was in college he volunteered at the Quincy Crisis Center and was very much motivated by the example of its director, Esther Sanger. During that same time frame, Larry was prayer partners with a janitor at the college, Lawson Sanders, who deeply influenced him. Some friends who had a strong impact on his life are Rob Gailey, who is now in charge of church consulting for micro-economic development at World Relief; and Jamie Gates, who now serves in the same capacity that Ron Benefiel, president of NTS, served in San Diego as an urban sociologist.

Before coming to NCM Larry served as a youth pastor for four years, as a program manager at Nazarene Headquarters, and as Regional Coordinator when he was a missionary in the Philippines. His responsibilities at his last assignment included spending time training and giving assistance on technical projects and working with church leadership to develop holistic ministry options and work in creative access countries.

I asked Larry about his time in the Philippines and what he learned about compassionate ministry while he was there. He told me his main passions included developing leaders and getting indigenous leadership in place. Larry told me, "How we do things is as important as what we do," especially in terms of mission, vision, and direction.

I had been informed that Gustavo Crocker had been a mentor for Larry, so I asked him about that relationship. Gustavo was his mentor in compassionate ministries. Larry said Gustavo forced him to do things that expanded his vision. Larry had been very narrowly focused before Gustavo came along, concentrating only on economic development. As he was given a variety of projects to work on he learned that he didn't need to know everything in order to lead or give good direction. During this period of his life, Larry learned how to inspire people towards a cause and not just a project. He discovered that compassionate ministry is more about the mission of the church and not just being another kind of NGO or non-profit organization.

I wondered what the draw to NCM was for Larry. He told me that serving here fulfills his call, and gives him an outlet for ministry. He especially enjoys working with the field staff all over the world, and just seeing how the church responds to human needs. I asked him to introduce us to some of these field staff people. He mentioned the following names to me: Luis Meza—the regional coordinator for South America, Arun Noah—the director of Nazarene Health care in

India (both hospital and community based health care), Trino Jara—the regional coordinator of Africa, originally from Panama. And these are just a few of the people Larry has the opportunity to work with around the world.

The highlight of the interview came as Larry began to explain his vision for NCM to me. His vision is that NCM would disappear into the fabric of the church. In other words, Nazarene compassionate ministries would not just be an organization, another entity at Nazarene headquarters, but that NCM would exist only because there are things that we, as the church, can do collectively that we can't do individually. NCM would then become the collective response of the church. Larry's dream is that NCM would inspire local units of social holiness to erupt throughout the world.

Larry's vision is an awe-inspiring one. It also represents a daunting task. I pray that all of us at NCM and all our supporters will be swept up as the Holy Spirit moves us toward social holiness.

SECTION FIVE: What are the Needs of the World that Demand a Response of "Compassion?"

Children around the World: the Raw Facts Compiled by Mindy Bowne Hancock

Poverty: In developing countries, every fourth child lives in abject poverty, in families with an income of less than \$1 a day.

Child Labor: According to the International Labour Organization, an estimated 246 million children are engaged in exploitative child labor. Almost three quarters of them work in hazardous environments such as mines or factories, or with dangerous substances such as chemicals and agricultural pesticides. Some 5.7 million of these children work under especially horrific circumstances, including the virtual slavery of bonded labor.

Sexual Exploitation: The use of children as a commodity for sex is a lucrative international trade. Worldwide, an estimated 1.2 million children are trafficked each year. About 1 million children (mainly girls, but also a significant number of boys) are exploited every year in the multibillion-dollar sex industry of pornography.

Child soldiers: At any given time, over 300,000 child soldiers, some as young as eight, are exploited in armed conflicts in more than 30 countries around the world. More than 2 million children are estimated to have died as a direct result of armed conflict over the last decade. At least 6 million children have been seriously injured or permanently disabled. Meanwhile, between 8,000 and 10,000 children continue to be killed or maimed by landmines each year.

FGM: Female genital mutilation/cutting: An estimated 100 million women and girls alive today have undergone some form of this traditional practice. As a result, they face lifelong health problems, including increased risks of dying or becoming disabled while giving birth.

Disabled: Out of 120 million to 150 million disabled children in developing countries, only 3 per cent attend school. Even when children do survive, they too often do not thrive. At least 10 per cent of all children – over 200 million in all – suffer some form of physical and/or mental disability or developmental delay (significantly low cognitive ability)

Malnutrition/Healthcare: Out of 100 children born in 2000, 30 will most likely suffer from malnutrition in their first five years of life, 26 will not be immunized against the basic childhood diseases, 19 will lack access to safe drinking water and 40 to adequate sanitation, and 17 will never go to school.

Child Mortality Rates: The most egregious consequence is that nearly 11 million children each year – about 30,000 children a day – die before reaching their fifth birthday, mostly from preventable causes. Of these children, 4 million die in their first month of life. In many of the world's poorest countries, child mortality rates have either not changed or else they have worsened. In sub-Saharan Africa, child mortality averages 173 deaths per 1,000 live births, and in South Asia 98 deaths per 1,000 – many times the industrialized country average of 7 deaths per 1,000.

HIV/AIDS: more than three million children under the age of 15 are infected. In 2002 alone, AIDS killed more than 610,000 children. Every day, almost 2,000 babies are infected with HIV during pregnancy, at birth or through breastfeeding. Without effective interventions, about one

third of infants born to HIV-positive mothers contract the virus. Most of these infants will die before their fifth birthday.

In 2001, at least 15 per cent of children in 10 sub-Saharan countries had lost one or both parents to AIDS or other causes. There are an estimated 13.4 million orphaned children in the world as a result of HIV/AIDS.

Oh God, may our hearts break along with yours over your precious children. May everyone who calls themself by Your name be available to be used by You in their lives, and may they learn compassion through the compassion they are shown.

Statistics adapted from UNICEF at http://www.unicef.org/media/media_9482.html

The Foods Resource Bank

from The Compassion Connection

With over 700 million undernourished people in the world, NCM is always seeking ways to bring hope to the hopeless. Because of this, NCM has partnered with the Foods Resource Bank and other Christian organizations to resource and educate the needy.

The Foods Resource Bank (FRB) is a Christian, non-government humanitarian organization committed to ensuring that food is a basic human right for all persons through support of sustainable development programs which address the human need for food security. With this program a church can set up a community growing project and have the proceeds from the sale of the crop help others around the world.

A community growing project is a unique and rewarding way for communities in the U.S. to raise money to fund food security programs - a long-term solution to the problem of world hunger - in villages in the developing world.

A typical project involves a group of people getting together to farm a common plot of land. Once harvested, the crop is converted to cash which is donated to FRB to supply things that are needed. This often includes resources like seeds, tools, drip irrigation, animals and instruction to local villagers who work to create community gardens, wells, herds, etc., which will sustain them long-term.

It is a wonderful way to get people from the community involved and to multiply the money a group can give.

If you would like to find out more information about the FRB contact David Green or Cort Miller at 816-333-7000 or visit http://www.foodsresourcebank.org/.

Twenty Good Reasons to Die

I can't go anywhere but that I'm inundated by the media on the issue of obesity (a euphemism for "fat"). A third of North American children are overweight, promising serious medical consequences within the next generation. On the other hand, miracle pills, vibrations belts, and exercise contraptions are being pushed as the solution to this growing problem. One could get fat just by absorbing the depressing news of it all.

A couple of years ago, a report detailing research in the Lancet Medical Journal names the 20 biggest risks to human health and their effect on disease, disability and death. Tackle these problems and life expectancy would improve by ten years in the poorest countries and by five in the richest.

The top 10 health hazards were rated in this descending order: underweight, unsafe sex, high blood pressure, tobacco, alcohol, contaminated water, sanitation and hygiene, iron deficiency, indoor pollution, high cholesterol and obesity.

Yet the poorest regions of the world such as sub-Saharan Africa and parts of South Asia show a different listing than that of developing and rich nations. There, the poor suffer from malnutrition, unsafe sex, indoor pollution such as the burning of manure and charcoal for cooking, unsafe water, sanitation, and hygiene.

Developing nations are menaced by alcohol, high blood pressure and tobacco, underweight and overweight conditions, high cholesterol and low fruit and vegetable intake.

The rich nations find their peril in tobacco, high blood pressure, excessive alcohol intake, high cholesterol, obesity, low fruit and vegetable intake and inadequate exercise.

Ironic, isn't it that, while much of the world suffers from bad technology and scarce food supplies, the rich kill themselves with excess and bad habits. Maybe the gnawing presence of the poor and undernourished of the world ought to serve as a wake-up call to our own extreme indiscipline, reminding us that the lifestyle of sharing may also be a road to good health.

On the other hand, I could quit fretting about it. It only raises my blood pressure!

Interview with Susan McKeithen, Regional Coordinator, South America

By Mindy Bowne Hancock

1. What is your role in the child sponsorship process? Do you work directly with the children?

I am Regional Coordinator for Child Sponsorship for South America (SAM). I do not work directly with the children. I am the administrator for the Pastor's Children program (SAM has 459 pastor's children with sponsors) and the Child Development program (73 children with sponsors). I have 6 area coordinators who work directly with the District superintendents or the parents of the children. SAM has 3 Child Development centers in Brazil (schools): 2 centers having between 130 - 150 children, and one center with 30 children (73 of whom have a sponsor).

2. What would a day in the life of a child sponsorship school look like?

In "Cenaza", in Curitiba, Brazil, the children are between the ages of 0-6. It is a day care in the middle of a slum area. The children come Monday through Friday, from 7:30 am to 5:00 pm and have 5 meals during the day (2 of which are snacks). At this school, the classes are divided by age, and they have someone in charge of curriculum. There are also two very nice patios and also a larger field with swings. They have a pastor who comes in to give Bible, and they also have access to psychologists to help with issues like abuse.

In "Crianca Feliz" in Nilopolis, Brazil, there is a school that starts at age 2 and goes on up until High School. The Day Care is for children between the ages of 2 - 6. There is a morning day care from 7 AM - 5 PM and an afternoon day care from 1 - 5 PM. The day care is open from 7 AM - 5 PM each day, Mon. - Friday. There is a elementary - high school. These children do not come from Christian homes but receive a Christian education and meals while at school. They also have a separate Bible teacher.

"Tempo de Amar" in Mesquita, Brazil, has children from 5 - 11 years old. It is an elementary school. They receive a Christian education and are fed all meals while at school. The children come from separated families or single parent families or don't have families at all. A church van picks them up and brings them to school. They have a meeting once a month with the parents to help the families. They are expanding to triple their size with their new building almost completed.

3. Where does a child sponsor's money go?

With pastor's kids program the money goes to the family to pay for school tuition, books, supplies, and school uniform. In the Child Development School, the money goes to the school for the child's school tuition and food.

4. What kinds of activities do the children do throughout the day?

The school creates a base for the child's future in helping them in their intellectual, emotional, and social and motor, and spiritual development. Their physical development is helped by a healthy diet provided through breakfast, lunch and dinner and snacks. There are also other resources made available to them like medical and dental care and psychologists for deeper rooted needs. Children are also provided with a party for their birthdays and other celebrations of holidays that their families are unable to celebrate because of lack of financial resources. These parties provide loving, social interaction between other students and the teachers and staff.

5. What are the strengths of the child sponsorship program?

A relationship is established by letter writing between the child and sponsor. Cross-cultural understanding is an outcome of the program. A sponsor can support the work of the Church of the Nazarene in another part of the world. It is a great, personal way to support missions within the sponsor's local Nazarene church. A sponsor can actively and personally impact church growth overseas, by supporting a local pastor's children.

6. Philosophically, what is your goal for child sponsorship?

Through sponsoring a child, the sponsor can be directly involved in missions. Economically deprived pastor's children can receive an education. A supportive prayer and caring relationship can be established between sponsor and a child in another part of the world.

7. Do you see compassion being instilled in these children?

I think a caring and loving God is made real to the children through what their sponsor provides for them. The children develop a thankful spirit through letter writing, thanking the sponsor for what they receive. The child is also taught to pray for and care about the sponsors needs as shared through letters.

8. How do we go about instilling the value of compassion in children?

Correspondence between the sponsor and the child is the key to making a money gift, more than money. Getting to know the person behind the money gift develops compassion in children.

Street People: A Case Study in Diseased Eyes

I've got to be up-front about my religious pedigree: conservative theological tradition that highlights the person and the soul. I direct an urban institute that works out of a "First Church" chummy with a long row of others all located along the once sedate Wilshire corridor of Los Angeles. In my neighborhood can be found a potpourri of human types and cultural flow that adds up to sensory overload.

With change have come the "street people," a threat to some, an opportunity to others. They slip into my office or into worship services on a regular basis—a ragtag collection of individuals, but in increasing number entire families, tots toddling along behind. Some are hostile or demanding; others stammer their requests in shyness, embarrassed to find themselves in their regrettable fate. Many speak in heavy accents or through adopted interpreters, others in dialects, a few in tears.

The litany of need is agonizingly varied—a bus ticket to Phoenix, food for the children, a bed for the night, a jacket for warmth, a signature for a document, someone who just wants to talk. Some rant in the clouded confusions of their own mind. I've heard these called insensitively in the vernacular, "space cadets." Yet I must admit that many times I am quite unsure where reality ends and imagination begins. In my despairing moments, I remind myself of St. Augustine's maxim, "Every meeting is a divine encounter."

In my town, perhaps 30,000 or more street people hang out as a phantom population, holed up in missions, alcoves, dark alleys, and beaches, sometimes damaged by the demonic effects of child abuse, drugs, and alcohol, or just a bad combination of low or high IQ, loss of job, divorce, heart attack, or bad fiscal decisions. They have dropped out of the bottom of the "security net."

Our students once worked with Andrew. He is a latter day Rip Van Winkle, perhaps sixty-ish, flowing white beard, a twinkle in his pixie blue eyes. He doesn't drive, smoke, or even eat hamburger meat. When I would get him french fries, he would try to pay me with his little stack of pennies and nickels. Church friends tried to salvage him, set him up in a tiny apartment, where he could receive social security checks. He was found later sleeping on an oil slick in an underground parking garage. Later he set up shop in the alcove across the street from the church under a pile of rags and newspapers, accompanied by his two grocery carts of personal belongings. Each morning, he ritualistically swept off the sidewalk and the sewer gutters as a part of his civic duty.

A friend of mine saw him and almost sneered, "If only he would accept Jesus Christ, he could get cleaned up and live more purposefully . . . like us." I was impudent. "Maybe not; I think that he is a Christian." "But he can't be and live like that!" was the retort. Between you and me, I had trouble imagining Andrew, "cleaned up."

And I reflected on Jesus. He was an itinerate prophet, and such were not reputable in Israel as productive members of society. He had no place to lay his head, gave no thought to tomorrow, and seems to have lived off of the good will of his friends. Furthermore, on occasion, he brusquely detached himself from his family. And to the temple moneychangers, whom he very

much upset, he must have appeared to be a rude intruder. Could it be that Jesus was a street person?

Has Jesus sanctioned the middle class lifestyle as that which is most Christian? Or are we to follow him into his homelessness, into his "live for today" philosophy, where we just "hang loose?" Is the external material condition of anyone an adequate or appropriate measure for an honest expression of the gospel?

Recently, George Caywood, director of the Union Rescue Mission of Los Angeles, shared with me a conversation he had with one of the former street persons now involved in their Christian growth program. The gentleman had observed that street people generally go through a sequence of questions as they are seduced into the street lifestyle. For a variety of reasons, a person finds him or herself on the streets for the first time and contemplates: "Do people survive like this?" The more that he observes, the more he becomes convinced that the streets are a viable option. As he gets more personally involved in the lifestyle, he then asks the question: "Can I survive like this?" The option becomes a habit as he reinforces the conviction of his own survivability. The final, and most disastrous question is "What must I do to survive like this?" Once the person has entered the nether world of this question, then the game of manipulation and the use of people as things is in full weed. The world no longer is made up of human beings but rather objects that only have meaning as they meet one's physical necessities. Forget the upper layers of Maslow's hierarchy of needs!

Again and again, in my encounters with street persons, I seek to find out who they are and ask lots of probing questions. And frequently they erupt with anger "I didn't come in here to be quizzed. I came here to get" I try to talk to them about Christ and the Christian community, but their habits of manipulation are such that they hear little of what I say.

The sin, then, is less in the lifestyle than in the corruption of the eyes, eyes created in the image of God, intended to sparkle around the true personhood of others. Eyes that laugh when others laugh and weep when others weep. The tragedy is that those eyes damaged to stage three are eyes so marred that they cannot see beyond their own needs. In the spectator's eyes, the world becomes masked and dehumanized, only useful as a delivery system of survival. John 9 describes the healing of a street person, a beggar born blind. The miracle that unfolds is one not just of physical eyesight but of restoring the capacity of the blind to see people as humans again: "Tell me so that I may believe in him." (Verse 35). It is not good enough just to see. The real miracle is to see people as Jesus sees them; in other words, through Jesus' eyes.

Caywood's informant gave me another important insight. The eyes of the most damaged street people are incapable of understanding and accepting the words and gestures of "I love you." Their feelings are so numbed, their manipulative ways so honed, that genuine words of tenderness and care are dispassionately rejected or misunderstood in the grasp for material gain. Any relationship of this type is inherently deceptive and non-reciprocal.

However, the eyes do watch. They watch the language of love directed towards other. In time, those eyes assess and heal by watching carefully how love is expressed to others. Love to a third party in similar circumstances is more instructive than "in your face" love. Perhaps, we can call

this exhibition of love, "indirect" or "oblique" love. The verse, "Behold, how the brethren love one another" is not just a sentimental description of how the church relates to itself. Rather, it is a poignant example of a creative process to strip the scales from the damaged eyes of those who can only understand love obliquely expressed. Key to this strategy are the dynamics of a loving community of believers who offer hospitality to others in a way that exhibits indirect love. Many churches, insular as they are, are too detached from street people to exhibit the power of a loving community.

Caywood shared with me this further insight. While ministering at the mission, he verbally handed out some bold "I love you's." One recipient, whom we will call Hugo, had never heard these words addressed to him before. They remained vacuous. However, as Hugo watched Caywood reinforce words with deeds to others, bit-by-bit the lessons of personhood and love took on positive content. After five years of living at the mission, Hugo announced abruptly that he was going home to care for his dying mother. Hugo's story was not uncommon—child abuse, deprivation, never once hearing the words "I love you" from his mother. He felt a responsibility to care for her in her last agonizing months, but, even more, he dreamed of hearing her tell him just once, "I love you." Sadly, she never did. But the power of the story is that, after never knowing what the words meant, a Christian community had so refashioned him that he could do so for the first time, hunger for parental love even unrequited. From the paralysis of desensitization and dehumanization, he became a person who could see people as people again.

There is a final irony to this whole discussion. If street people can be diagnosed by the disease of their eyes, so, too, can Christians. The Christ that sees street people only as "lazy bums," "dirty," "should be banned from the neighborhood," "a bunch of liars," "riffraff," "they're out to get you every time," "I'm sorry, we can't help you at all"—these are the Christians who have depersonalized others to the point of being guilty of seeing people as things. And, like the Pharisees of John 9, they cynically sneer a modern version of "You were steeped sin at birth; how dare you lecture us!" (Verse 34). Jesus answers us with a warning: "For judgment I have come into this world, so that the blind will see and those who see will become blind" (verse 39).

For those of us who are trying to express God's love to people devoid of a home, street people provoke in us the litmus test of the quality of our own eyes. We who proclaim to see are called to touch in healing ways the eyes of those who yet cannot.

Sorry, But There's Not Much 'Refuge' In 'Refugee!' Reprinted from Holiness Today, Nov. 2001, by Fletcher L. Tink

More often than not, the name, the label, "refugee" is a misnomer. For millions of people consigned to that pitiable state, there just isn't much "refuge" to shout about.

Indeed, replacing an "s" for an "g" in the word "refuge" to form "refuse" more accurately describes the conditions of a refugee. Take your choice! It can be "re-fuse" as in "trash," and "discarded humanity;" or re-fuse with accent on the second syllable, describing the attitudes of both of expelling and recipient nations; or stretching it a bit it could be "re-fuse" as in igniting an explosive tinderbox of violent passion. A refugee, who is refused acceptance and dignity at every turn and feels thrown aside as disposable garbage, is prone to spontaneous combustion.

A refugee is caught in a double bind. Seen by the homeland as "persona non grata", he or she is often considered an "illegal alien" at the place of residence. An immigrant is a foreign-born individual who voluntarily leaves his/her country of origin. In contrast, a refugee is described as "a person who, owing to a well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership in a particular social group, or political opinion, is outside the country of nationality and is unable to or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to avail him/herself of the protection of that country." 14 million people are reduced into this horrid dilemma, though they are, in theory at least, protected by a well-defined body of international laws and conventions. Thankfully, their numbers have been reduced gradually from the 17.6 million refugees counted in 1992.

Added to these are another 25 million internally displaced persons, continuing to live in their homeland, but without rights, international protections and permanent residencies. They bob as flotsam on the tossing sea of nationalistic or sectarian whims. In the last several years their numbers have increased dramatically, up another 4 million in the latest recording year, 1999.

Violence and war forced 7 million people to flee their homes in 1999, a million from Kosovo fleeing "ethnic cleansing", three-quarters of a million from East Timor, a half million people in Chechnya. Less conspicuous were the 800,000 uprooted people in Congo-Brazzaville, 500,000 in Angola, 400,000 in both Congo-Kinshasa and Burundi, 350,000 each in Afghanistan, Ethiopia, and Eritrea.

But this is a worldwide problem with populations being uprooted from 60 countries worldwide. The country of Sudan accounts for one out of every nine of the world's displaced people. And Sudan, Afghanistan, and Angola, three countries alone have produced more than one fourth of the world's entire uprooted peoples. Another forty nations receive the spillover of these fleeing peoples, some with open arms, others with hostile resentment. All together, the number of identified refugees and internally displaced persons (IDP) has grown 7 million or over 20% in the last decade.

For a generation, award-winning musicals such as "Fiddler on the Roof" and "The Sound of Music" have shown the sadness and personal pain of the refugee status—the confiscation of property, the slicing apart of families, material deprivation and gnawing uncertainty about the

future. What they fail to show is the brutality, the trauma, the desperation, the tribalism and racism that often accompany those who flee. Chronically, refugees descend on some tentative destination, exhausted, sick, traumatized and penniless, only to be herded into congested refugee camps, chronically incapable of offering legal jobs or formal education for the disoriented children.

The following statistics are of note:

- Most refugees are women and children.
- More than half of the world's refugees live in Africa and the Middle East.
- Palestinian refugees account for the largest block of displaced persons; over 5 million await return to their homeland.
- Of Western countries, Colombia currently has the greatest crisis of internally displaced persons with over 1,700,000 people trapped in the crossfire of civil unrest.
- One of every 115 people on earth has been forced at some time in life into flight from home.
- Iran is the nation that hosts more of the world's refugees than any other—almost 2 million.
- The United States currently hosts over 600,000 refugees including 85,000 admitted in 1999. Canada has accepted over half a million in the last 20 years. Great Britain approved 20,000 asylum seekers in the year 2000.
- The majority of asylum seekers in Europe and North America are men.
- Churches in the United States have resettled more than 400,000 refugees.
- 13 million refugees worldwide were voluntarily repatriated (returned to their homelands) during the decade of the 90's. Due to changed political environments, large numbers of refugees have gone home to Cambodia, Vietnam, Laos, Nicaragua, Bangladesh, Mozambique, Ethiopia, and Rwanda.

The plight of refugees and internally displaced persons resonates loudly in the consciousness of Christianity. Our historical origins are rooted in rootlessness. Our ancestral parents, Adam and Eve, were exiled from their God-given homeland. Cain was sent packing. Israel itself was resettled in Egypt due to economic famine and then expelled from there as they looked for the God-given option. Judah languished for 400 years in exile. And then Jesus . . .

Ironic, isn't it, that Jesus, as an infant, chased out of Bethlehem by a vicious political ruler, should settle for awhile in Africa, the continent that currently congregates so many of the world's refugees!

Isn't it Christ that reminds us that the true measure of hospitality is gauged not by inviting friends, brothers or relatives, or rich neighbors to our banqueting table, but rather, the poor, the crippled, the lame, the blind and, in hosting them, blessing comes. (Luke 14:12-14) The refugee, by definition, is impoverished financially, crippled vocationally, hobbled socially, and blinded culturally. The Church, flashing back to her own hapless heritage, reaches across, mindful that angels, even Christ, mingle in the gestures.

I have known such a Church, my denomination, which has embraced with caring arms clusters of refugees.

- DATELINE: Bucharest Romania: Two Christian Arab families escape from Iraq during the Desert Storm War. They escape to Jordan where they are adopted by the Church of the Nazarene. Currently, in that land, twelve congregations minister among Iraqi refugees and 50 Iraqi children are being supported by Nazarene child sponsorship in their Christian school programs. Unable to obtain local legal papers, Tiador and Sawa migrate to Romania where missionaries Jon and Margie Scott fashion ministry out of their availability. Soon they become the evangelistic wedge into the extensive Arab population, presenting repeatedly the Jesus Film in the arabic language throughout this capital city. Then life takes a blessed turn! Canada has relocated them, in answer to their prayers, to be reunited with their families.
- DATELINE: Malawi: Four young adults flee from their war-ravaged nation of Burundi to Malawi. After four years of study at the Central African Nazarene Bible College, they present themselves for graduation. Manase and Verite, a husband and wife team, along with their two male friends Gabin and Luc, feel the call of God to minister among French speaking populations. Zambian Nazarenes have invited them to pastor there. However, lacking legal documentation, they cannot accept their assignment. As a telling sign of the reconciling power of God, three of them, from the Hutu tribe, are soul mates to their friend, Luc, the Tutsi, who, though the recent genocides, was politically cast as a mortal enemy. Together, they await God's pronouncement that perhaps will open doors to legal legitimacy somewhere.
- DATELINE: Columbia, Maryland: Roberto Hodgson escapes Nicaragua during his nation's festering civil war. He fears conscription into the Marxist army with its obligation to fight against his compatriots. He appears in Washington, D.C. where he finds salvation and security in Christ through the agency of Washington First Church. That church funds him to study at the Nazarene Seminary in Costa Rica from where he graduates and returns to pastor the Spanish-language congregation at Washington First. From there, he spawns eight Hispanic church starts and has now been tapped by Nazarene headquarters as Hispanic Mission Director.
- DATELINE: Ethiopia: Sudan, the scene of the most massive recent refugee escape, loses
 half a million of its residents to neighbors such as Ethiopia. Already, 70 preaching points
 emerge in recent months in the makeshift refugee camps. Though the Church of the
 Nazarene cannot legally enter into the Sudan, on the doorsteps of that country are hundreds
 of new converts awaiting a reversal of political winds for the opportunity to return to their
 homeland.
- DATELINE: Southern Africa: According to Trino Jara, African Nazarene Compassionate
 Ministry director, the denomination, through its compassionate ministry incentives, supports
 various projects that minister to Angolan refugees in Zambia and the Democratic Republic of
 the Congo, keying in on issues of food security—providing food up to four months for
 refugees and internally displaced persons and releasing seeds and tools so that recipients can
 plant their own food-producing gardens.

Typically, refugees are not sneaking into the West to capture the good life. Their driving ambition is to return to their homeland under pacified and improved circumstances. Many of them, partnered with the Biblical wanderer, Abraham, know themselves to be strangers on the

earth, looking for a country of their own. It is our glorious privilege, as a despised and peculiar people, ourselves, to offer true hospitality while here on earth, and to help them long for a better country, a heavenly one, that God has prepared for them (Hebrews 11:13-16). Only then will they know true and final "refuge".

For more information, please contact, Nazarene Compassionate Ministries International at www.nazcompassion@nazarene.org, or Church World Service at www.churchworldservice.org/immigration or Amnesty International at www.refuge.amnesty.org or the U.S. Committee for Refugees at www.refugee.org.

Recommended Books: <u>Making Room: Recovering Hospitality as a Christian Tradition</u>, by Christine D. Pohl, (Eerdmans, 1999). <u>Lost on Earth: Nomads of the New World</u> by Mark Fritz, (Routledge, 2000)

From Hellmont to Belmont

Reprinted from Holiness Today, Aug. 2000, by Fletcher L. Tink

The rest of the world knows it as "Washington." For insiders, it is simply D.C.—District of Columbia. Many resent this city as a symbol of big government, high taxes and political manipulation. It is, without question, "the leadership center of gravity." Yet for the 7.2 million people who live here, Washington is simply home.

Like most other cities, D.C. has its defining evil, but the evil is subtle and not as outsiders see it. It is an evil that operates in the head.

In Washington, one is tempted to think in dichotomies, in "either/or," in irreconcilable opposites. There is a confrontational mindset here and the clashes can be ugly. It is easy to be caught up in the hostilities between perceived opposites: Northern culture versus Southern; inside the Beltway versus outside; powerful versus powerless; Black versus White; Republican versus Democrat; rich versus poor. There is much power and influence to be gained by digging in on one side of the fence or the other, so there is little incentive for reconciliation. For the Christian whose message reaches across boundaries, Washington can be an uncomfortable experience.

Political analyst Sidney Blumenthal captured the essence of the problem: "The concept of service has little political currency in Washington. Everyone is fair game, simply by being on the other side. Humiliating one's prey, not merely defeating one's foe, is central to the process."

Yet in the midst of this atmosphere of antagonism, I found grace in two of my Washington friends.

The first is Tom Tarrants, III. Before I moved to Washington, Tom called to welcome me to the city. A man of soft, Southern accent and slim, angular features, he became my open door to the world of bureaucrats, politicians, and the Christian community. Some months after we met, he revealed that his secret past was about to be documented in a major book, *Terror in the Night*.

He confessed that he had been a Ku Klux Klan operative in his youth, a "mad dog killer," the "most dangerous man in Mississippi." In a "righteous" effort to disrupt the Civil Rights Movement, which he believed was a sinister Communist plan that would mongrelize the "superior" white race, he planted 30 bombs in homes, churches, and synagogues throughout the southern United States. Captured in an F.B.I. sting operation with 19 bullets in his body and impaled on an electric fence, Tom recovered and was sentenced to 30 years in jail. He escaped, was recaptured, and then was sentenced to an additional 6 years. Through it all, he never lost his determination to manipulate his way out so that he could continue "God's mission."

But God had other intentions. The Christian wife of the F.B.I. officer who organized the sting led a Bible study, and she and her friends visited Tom weekly. Guided by their ministry and his own studious search of literature and scripture, he one day fell on his face on the floor and, alone in his cell, received Jesus into his life.

Tom's story since that day sparkles with grace. He was released years early because the very persons he had attacked vouched for his transformation. He became an F.B.I. informant against

the KKK and fled to Washington for fear of reprisals. Since then, he has crisscrossed through agencies and organizations in Washington with clear testimony of God's reconciling love. Tom Skinner, African-American evangelist, writer, and activist, said, "To know Tom is to know the power of redemption." President Clinton, after reading *Terror in the Night*, commented in a television interview that the redemption Tom found is the only authentic way to achieve racial reconciliation.

Rita Bright, my second friend, was the epitome of the person Tom loved to hate. Rita was a homeless African-American mother living on welfare in an abandoned apartment on Belmont Street when she responded to the gospel shared by the Community of Hope. The Community of Hope, a bellwether Nazarene ministry a mile and a half north of the White House, provides apartments for families on the economic edge as well as community medical, tutorial, and spiritual ministries. Rita's life changed dramatically, and she worked her way up to leadership in the very agency that had confronted her with the claims of Christ.

Belmont Street is still a rough-and-tumble place, but I love to teach college-level Bible courses there. One day I asked my students if they knew what the name "Belmont" meant. When they had no answer, I offered the idea that it meant *belle monte*, or "beautiful hill." Rita jumped up with unabashed inspiration. "Praise God! Praise God!" she exclaimed. "God is transforming this community from 'Hellmont' to Belmont!" We laughed and rejoiced with the glory of her insight.

Later I invited Tom Tarrants to lecture to these same students. What a moment! The former hater stood in the embrace of Rita and others who years earlier had been the fodder for his anger. Their two worlds, once so hostile, merged into one, for God had applied His reconciling balm.

A cynic once said that Washington is a giant Elks Club with a lot of secret handshakes. I'm glad to have discovered within it an eternal Holy Club that cuts across race and class with soul-to-soul embraces.

SECTION SIX: What does it mean to Live a Lifestyle of "Compassion?"

Looks of Love: How to Discover your Neighborhood

- 1. <u>Look Back:</u> Take an interest in the history of the community. Explore its historical landmarks. Understand why people came into the community in the first place; why do they stay here now? Identify the immigrants that have populated the community. Know something about the political, religious, and economic history of the community. Is there a besetting "sin" in the history of the community that will need to be confronted?
- 2. <u>Look Around:</u> Examine the current demographic and geo-demographic composition of the community. What are the religious entities within the community, and what sustains them? What are the population trends? What are the neglected population groups for ministry according to age, family structure, life cycles, ethnic and linguistic representation? What are some of the unreached sub-cultural groups?
- 3. <u>Look Into</u>: Learn about the underlying systems and structures that knit the community together such as education, child care, human services. Are they working effectively? Identify the "power brokers," "opinion leaders," "gatekeepers" who make things happen or restrict things from happening. Is there a network of like-minded Christians willing to support the ministry in this community? Look into scriptural models of building biblical communities, e.g., the Book of Nehemiah.
- 4. <u>Look Across:</u> Get together with key people in the community—religious leaders, service providers, business and industrial officials. Ask them how a new church initiative might benefit the community. See the neighborhood through the eyes of the children, the poor, the elderly, and minorities. Learn the perspectives and desires of these for the quality of their own lives.
- 5. <u>Look Ahead:</u> Brainstorm a whole range of ministry possibilities with your informants. Start with possibilities and then assess resources already within the community. Challenge others to engage with the future mission. Encourage participants to envision their own future biblically.
- 6. <u>Look Up:</u> Engage in serious intercessory prayer for the community. Build around you a prayer support group to seek God's guidance and their counsel. Draw the community into a spirit of communion that opens up dialogue and ritual with God and His purposes for the future.

The Problem of Trifocal Vision

A wise man once said that there are really only three ways of seeing people: as *machines*, as *landscape*, or as *people*.

Often we see people instrumentally, as *machines* or extension of machines: for instance, the checkout lady at the supermarket, the tollbooth collector, or the operator on the assembly line. Their repeated motions and their functional purpose all lead one to see them mechanistically. Their behaviors, like ours, are programmed. Our response is to be bored or disinterested. We only choose to interact when something goes wrong.

Sometimes we see people as *landscape*, that is, as an extension of their environment. Tourists and even missionaries sometimes photograph "natives" in funny, costumed dress, framed by the backdrop of lush natural vegetation. Or, it could be some inner-city type, caught in the pose of despair and surrounded by urban ugliness. The photographs stir amusement, pathos, or horror. They wrench our emotions and stimulate our passions often without seeing the larger picture.

But to see people as *people*, that is the Jesus way. It takes involvement and relationship. It chooses to journey with the person until real needs are uncovered, real strengths are appreciated, and real exchange occurs.

There is a danger in compassion-oriented programs, namely, to view donors and recipients mechanistically and assume sacrifice or need without recognizing the cost to the person behind it. If NCM has ever done so, please forgive us and help us to do better.

There is further peril in stirring passion and emotion, as some TV networks practice. "Bleed Leads" show the ugly, awful, or cute to provoke contributions. Presentation of the world's tragedies must be balanced by honesty, integrity, and restraint.

What I find exciting is that many people really do want to experience the world they financially contribute to. Youth in Mission, C.A.U.S.E., Work and Witness, the *JESUS* Film presentations, "One Heart, Many Hands," Child Sponsorship, Harvest Partners, and Vision trips are opportunities where donors and volunteers venture forth to engage the people they are helping in a personal way.

We encourage this. Yet we understand that many cannot go. These are represented by proxy. But for those who can, it is often a reality check on our services and replaces one's trifocal vision with eyes healed by Christ.

Pencil in the Hand of God

An Interview with Mother Teresa of Calcutta, reprinted from Time magazine, Dec. 4, 1989.

- Q. What did you do this morning?
- A. Pray.
- Q. When did you start?
- R. Half past four.
- Q. And after prayer?
- R. We try to pray through our work by doing it with Jesus, for Jesus, to Jesus. That helps us put our whole heart and soul into doing it. The dying, the crippled, the mentally ill, the unwanted, the unloved—they are Jesus in disguise.
- Q. People know you as a sort of religious social worker. Do they understand the spiritual basis of your work?
- R. I don't know. But I give them a chance to come and touch the poor. Everybody has to experience that. So many young people give up everything to do just that. This is something so completely unbelievable in the world, no? And yet it is wonderful. Our volunteers go back different people.
- Q. Does the fact that you are a woman make your message more understandable?
- R. I never think like that.
- Q. But don't you think the world responds better to a mother?
- R. People are responding not because of me but because of what we are doing. I think that before people were speaking much about the poor, but now more and more people are speaking to the poor. That is the great difference. Before, nobody bothered about the people in the street. We have picked up from the streets of Calcutta 54,000 people, and 23,000-something have died in that one room (at Kalighat).
- Q. Humble as you are, it must be an extraordinary thing to be a vehicle of God's grace in the world.
- A. But it is his work. I think God wants to show his greatness by using nothingness.
- Q. You feel you have no special qualities?
- A. I don't think so. I don't claim anything of the work. It is his work. I am like a little pencil in his hand. That is all. He does the thinking. He does the writing. The pencil has nothing to do with it. The pencil has only to be allowed to be used. In human terms, the success of our work should not have happened, no?
- Q. What is God's greatest gift to you?
- A. The poor people.
- Q How are they a gift to you?
- A. I have an opportunity to be 24 hours a day with Jesus.

- Q. Here in Calcutta, have you created a real change?
- A. I think so. People are aware of the presence, and also many, many many Hindu people share with us. Now we never see a person lying there in the street dying. It has created a worldwide awareness of the poor.
- Q. Beyond showing the poor to the world, have you conveyed any message about how to work with the poor?
- A. You must make them feel loved and wanted. They are Jesus for me. I believe in that much more than doing big things for them.
- Q. Friends of yours say you are disappointed that your work has not brought more conversions in this great Hindu nation.
- A. Missionaries don't think of that. They only want to proclaim the word of God. Numbers have nothing to do with it. But the people are putting prayer into action by coming and serving the people. Everywhere people are helping. There may not be a big conversion like that, but we do not know what is happening in the soul.
- Q. What do you think of Hinduism?
- A. I love all religions, but I am in love with my own.
- Q. And they should love Jesus too?
- A. Naturally, if they want peace, if they want joy, let them find Jesus. If people become better Hindus, better Muslims, better Buddhists by our acts of love, then there is something else growing there. They come closer and closer to God. When they come closer, they have to choose.
- Q. You and Pope John Paul II have spoken out against life-styles in the West, against materialism and abortion. How alarmed are you?
- A. I always say one thing. If a mother can kill her own child, then what is left of the West to be destroyed? It is difficult to explain, but it is just that.
- Q. Is materialism in the West an equally serious problem?
- A. I don't know. I have so many things to think about. Take our congregation; we have very little, so we have nothing to be preoccupied with. The more you have, the more you are occupied, the less you give. But the less you have, the more free you are. Poverty for us is a freedom. It is not a mortification, a penance. It is joyful freedom. There is no television here, no this, no that. This is the only fan in the whole house. It doesn't matter how hot it is and it is for the guests. But we are perfectly happy.
- Q. How do you find rich people then?
- A. I find the rich much poorer. Sometimes they are more lonely inside. They are never satisfied. They always need something more. I don't say all of them are like that. Everybody is not the same. I find that poverty hard to remove. The hunger for love is much more difficult to remove than the hunger for bread.
- Q. There has been some criticism of the very severe regimen under which you and your sisters live.

- A. We choose that. That is the difference between us and the poor. Because that will bring us closer to our poor people. How can we be truthful to them if we lead a different life? What language will I speak to them?
- Q. What is the most joyful place that you have ever visited?
- A. Kalighat. When the people die in peace, in the love of God, it is a wonderful thing. To see our poor people happy together with their families, these are beautiful things. The joy of the poor people is so clean, so clear. The real poor know what is joy.
- Q. There are people who would say it is an illusion to think of the poor as joyous, that they must be given housing, raised up.
- A. The material is not the only thing that gives joy. Something greater than that, the deep sense of peace in the heart. They are content. That is the great difference between the rich and the poor.
- Q. People who work with you say you are unstoppable. You always get what you want.
- R. That's right. All for Jesus.
- Q. What are your plans for the future?
- A. I just take one day. Yesterday is gone. Tomorrow has not come. We have only today to love Jesus.
- Q. And the future of the order?
- A. It is his concern.

Oh, Calcutta, Oh!

Calcutta has percolated within my consciousness for as long as I remember. It is as if a piece of my DNA is encoded by her. Was it something drilled into me when I was a wee lad in imperial England? Was it the growing consciousness of extreme compassion expressed by Mother Teresa "of Calcutta?" Or is it because my very own children have half of their genetic make-up derived out of the bowels of India itself?

Time has yielded no answers. But I've had this great need to visit there. Not as tourist, but as pilgrim. Less to be informed, rather to be transformed.

I recently spent 9 days in Calcutta, once the second greatest city in the British Empire. I did some menial, sacramental service at three of the homes of Mother Teresa. I engaged with the Church of the Nazarene, and indeed, leaders from across denominations. I blistered my feet walking. I drenched my shirt, sweating. I sucked it all in, and still was hungry for more. My body held up; my spirit was broken down, demanding the restoration that only the Holy Spirit can accomplish.

I find that "context" reworks my understanding of Scripture. On a hot Calcutta Sunday morning, I got up to preach but instead stumbled through a narrative of my own need. My chosen Scripture was Luke 6:6-17, about the visitor who sneaked into church with his dead, wizened-up right hand. He thought he might learn something from the Master. Instead he was healed.

That week, I had seen paralytic hands, contorted hands, stubby hands minus fingers, hands caked in gangrene and grime, missing hands. . . and feet and legs, arms and cheeks and ears. I had seen men reduced to snake-like wriggling, crawling around on their stomachs because their legs were useless twigs. Unable to roll over, the best they could do was cup their hands upwards hoping that someone might drop down a coin.

As I read the passage to the congregation, these images flooded my mind. Then I remembered the Sisters of Charity and the hodge-podge international volunteers who rub warmth and love into useless limbs. Only hours before I had read a passage in *City of Joy* scripted out of Calcutta's existence, about Estrid Dane, the British miracle worker/doctor. The book describes her working on the inert body of a "small emaciated boy of five or six...his arms, legs, eyes, head, everything about him was devoid of life," a victim of polio. "Then Estrid's hands began their awe-inspiring ballet. Slowly and methodically the old woman probed Subash's muscles, his tendons, his bones, to try and distinguish the dead areas from those where there might still be a spark of life. . . Each movement seemed to say to him, 'Wake up, Subash, move your arms, your legs, your feet. Live, Subash!"

Dominique LaPierre, the author, goes on: "Suddenly. . .a series of vibrations seemed to shake the child's body. His right arm came to life first, then his left. The head that had seemed for so long to be soldered at his chin to his chest in a prone position gave a slight movement. Timidly, weakly, the life was being breathed back into that mummified body

... They [Dane's fingers] had reawoken the nervous system, compelled it to send its impulses through that little living corpse" (422-423). LaPierre concludes: "Nevertheless, that terrible city of Calcutta had taught me the most beautiful lesson in hope of my life."

To the congregation, I theologized, metaphorized, and dramatized my sermon. But in conclusion, I shared a moment's inspiration. "Ah," I said, "I now know the name of the person with the withered hand. Her name is . . . Calcutta." The congregation was deadpan silent.

Calcutta has snuck into church, sits at the rear pew hoping to be unperceived in the panoply of religious personalities. She yearns to hide her witherment. But the rags reveal all. In strut the regulars, dressed in their finery, making their way to the front of the sanctuary, tunics wrapped in flaps of security.

I recognize them. They are called Los Angeles, Washington, Toronto, Tokyo, London, Berlin and elsewhere. Fine cities, centers of prestige and power, dressed to the hilt with gaudy materialism and highbrow sophistication.

But I see Jesus' eyes fix on Calcutta, not accusing but ingratiating. Calcutta averts the gaze. How she wishes she could hide her deficiencies, suppress her disabilities!

But the gaze audibly forms into words, frightening and shameful, though never severe.. First, "step out." Then "stretch out." She would rather run out! But embarrassment is transformed into obedience. The impossible becomes possible. And a miracle takes place.

At her side, I, see someone standing, equally head bowed. This stranger bears my name. And my own witherments are exposed for the contortions they really are—my indisciplines, insensitivities, my obsessions for comfort and convenience. Slowly I drag out my own diseased appendage and stretch it impossibly towards the Lord. I weep for the first time in two years.

I see those in the front pew squirm with malevolence. I know them too well. Their backseat intruder has drawn divine attention and they are mad. They paid well for their front row access to divinity and God should have taken note.

Could it be that under their opulent tunics, they hide their own grotesque witherments, concealed just so discretely that they would never attract public notice? But then, the more that I hang around them, the more I face the sad reality that at the core of their paralysis, might just be withered hearts.

Changing the World One Person at a Time By Luis Meza South American Nazarene Compassionate Ministries Director

A song lyric says: "if we touch them with the love of Jesus Christ." But how?

There is a story about a fisherman who at midday saw a girl far off walking on the beach. Curiously, he got a little bit closer. He noted that she was bending over, picking up something from the sand, and then throwing it into the sea. Time and time again he saw the girl do this. Intrigued the fisherman asked the girl, "What are you doing?"

She responded, "I am returning the starfish back to the ocean. The tide has gone down and they are being left behind in the sand. They will dry up and die if I do not return them to the ocean."

"I understand," said the man, now in a pensive mood. Then he pointed to all the starfish along the beach and remarked, "But there must be miles of beach . . . don't you realize that there are too many and no matter how hard you try, you will not be able to save them all? All your efforts aren't worth it." The girl smiled, bent over and reached for another starfish. As she threw it in the water, she looked at the man, smiling and said, "It was worth it for this one."

The biblical writer is right when he says in Luke 4:25-27, "But the truth is, there were many widows in Israel in the time of Elijah, when the heaven was shut up three years and six months, and there was a severe famine over all the land; yet Elijah was sent to none of them except to a widow at Zarephath in Sidon. There were also many lepers in Israel in the time of the prophet Elisha, and none of them was cleansed except Naaman the Syrian."

In Jesus time he didn't transform the world of the blind but he did change the world of Bartimeus. He didn't liberate every demon-possessed person, but he did transform the life of the Gaderean demonic. What else can we say—he transformed the world of the widow of Nain, Lazarus, Zacchaeus, etc.

We cannot change the whole world. There is much poverty, many children on the street, many elderly that need attention, many people without jobs, many broken marriages, many hungry people, many, many, needs. But we can change the world of needy people that we touch with the love of Jesus.

Jesus said, "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to bring good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to let the oppressed go free, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor" (Luke 4:18-19).

Ana's Violin and Other Broken Things

Anahit, or Ana, for short, loved her violin. Trained in the local conservatory in Gyumri, Armenia, she played regularly with the city-wide Academy orchestra. At times, she solo-ed at weddings, family celebrations and special occasions, supplementing her meager family income. But her greatest joy was to play the songs and hymns praising God.

One day, the violin broke beyond repair. With sadness, she sold the pieces for needed cash, to feed the family, hoping that, perhaps someday, she might be able to save sufficiently to buy another. But at a family income of a dollar a day, that day never came.

Gyumri is a city of 300,000, the second largest in this landlocked country of 3.3 million people, squeezed uncomfortably between its hostile neighbors, Azerbaijan, Georgia, Iran and Turkey. Armenia was the first country to officially become Christian, in 301 A.D. King Tiridates was dramatically healed after hearing the Gospel from the Christian missionary Gregory, the Illuminator whom he had persecuted in prison for 13 years. Upon his conversion, Tiridates declared that his nation would forever follow Christ.

But Armenia, like the violin, has been broken in too many ways. Over the years, it has been invaded successively by Romans, Byzantiums, Arabs, Persians and Ottomans, crushed by communism, leveled by earthquakes, massacred by Turks. Its neighbors have chomped away on its borders until its icon, Mt Arafat of Noah's ark fame, no longer rises majestic on its terrain. Its current size, somewhat smaller than the state of Maryland, is one tenth of what it used to be. Throughout its tragic history, the sounds of weeping and loss have threatened to extinguish its music.

Ana is a pastor's wife with two darling daughters, Nona and Rosa. Her husband, Seryan, as Nazarene pioneer minister, is carving out a congregation in a nation where 94% of the people belong, at least nominally, to the Armenian Apostolic Church. In less than two years, the ministry has grown to 40 believers, many of them young people, preparing to serve God. The couple lives from the proceeds of offerings which, to this point, barely provide for daily necessities. Yet they press on with joy and thankfulness.

Their city, too, is broken! In 1988, a massive earthquake shattered their community. Nobody knows whether 25,000 or 100,000 people died, but most survivors found themselves homeless. Until then, Gyumri, was an industrial center, highly productive of machine tools and textiles while Armenia, itself, was considered the luscious garden of the former Soviet Union. But with the earthquake, the factories were irreparably damaged. Shortly thereafter, on the disaster's brutal heels, came the breakup of the communism and the withdrawal of almost all Russian aid and markets, compounded with border war skirmishes. Many international relief agencies gallantly tried to fill the gap, offering emergency assistance, but little help to reconstruct the economic and physical infrastructure. Their legacy today is seen primarily in the abandoned relief storage containers, now improvised to serve as tiny homes for those unable to find other accommodation. Few jobs remain, and the memory of death still haunts its residents.

Likewise, the Armenia people have been broken! In 1915, half of Armenia's population of 3 million was slaughtered in the "Genocide," that the rest of the world has conveniently forgotten. One result of this was the scattering of its population around the world, so that now 70% of all Armenians live outside of their nation, concentrated in Russia (2.25 million), Turkey (2 million), and the U.S. (1.4 million of whom 1 million live in Los Angeles, with additional concentrations in Boston and New York), aching to reconnect to the homeland but finding it so logistically difficult.

Recently, a men's fellowship group in Brampton, Ontario raised funds towards a new violin for Ana. The Nazarene Armenian congregation in Toronto did the same. Together, \$350 was sent to Ana to purchase a violin so that she could make music again. On a Western economy, this is "gravy" money. But to a beautiful Armenian family, the gift is golden.

I was told that, in the year 2001, Armenia, after the demise of communism, celebrated 1,700 years of Christianity by destroying its statues of Lenin and in their place, erecting the Cross—symbol both of brokenness and healing.

In a poor country where courageous Christians can be found, \$350 is a loving gesture that transcends culture, language, and politics, played out the sweet tones of a violin that knows well that broken things can made whole by the power of God and the compassion of caring friends.

Reconciliation Gone Wild

The Mel Gibson movie "The Passion of The Christ" is a huge hit in the Middle East. I know. I was just there, in Syria and Jordan.

I had seen the movie for the first time on Good Friday in comfortable, convenient America and felt alternatively moved, motivated, mad, and mystified (by the extra-biblical symbols that I did not always understand). I was surprised that, with all the hype, my emotions were more plugged than expected; my mind, more engaged. But then, I had steeled myself to shut my eyes at the most pained sequences.

I thought long about the androgynous Satanic figure festering worm and snake, Judas' dead donkey, the crow on the cross, the divine tear that drops to earth seismically shaking it. And I saw Jesus repeatedly reduced to postures that embraced the grimy ground. Yet from the prostrate position of total humiliation and helplessness, his gaze offered hope. I wondered how low we must be leveled to connect with those around us.

But I also thought that American secular audiences just don't get it! The elitist media cries "sadism" and "stereotypes" out of the niceties of a culture gone soft. As I watched the film in plush circumstances, I yearned for the opportunity to see it in a world so close to Christ's own culture, in a place where woundedness and pain abound. Maybe they would regard it differently. I decided that I wanted to see it in an Aramaic context perhaps in Syria, and measure there, if human assessment might be the same.

I didn't get that opportunity. In Damascus, Syria, the film had been sold out days ahead. Seats were unavailable. I'm told that this city, the oldest continuously inhabited one in the world, has responded with ticket sales superior to any city elsewhere. I was also told that at the beginning to the showings, few people populated the theater. But as the lights are lowered, the Muslim masses sneak in, hoping not to be seen. As the presentation proceeds, wails and cries well up throughout the theater. Raw nerves are touched. Questions are raised. And new perceptions about the Christ replace old. For the first time they begin to believe that Jesus really died on the cross and not just an imposter.

And in the nearby Aramaic town of Maalula, which has stood throughout history as a rock bastion of Christianity, there is no movie theater to be had.

But pirated DVDs of the movie are plentiful at a dollar a copy. And everywhere they are being hawked. Weird, isn't it, that Western legalities are lost in the hunger for learning about Christ! God does some strange "end runs" around our systematized principles.

I was told that there are many secret Muslim believers. Stories of visions and dreams of the figure of Jesus interrupt their religious paradigms, calling them to new faith and brave hopes in a world neither conducive nor sympathetic to "The Way."

I had the opportunity to preach on separate nights to hundreds of refugees at the "Jesus of Nazareth" Church smack dab in the middle of ancient Damascus in a tiny alley a stone's throw from Strait Street of Pauline fame, and to Palestinian youth in Amman. I found these populations, stereotyped and demonized by Western media, wonderfully transformed by the Gospel, gracious in their love, enthusiastic in their service.

Ruth*, my beautiful Syrian informant (she has been a Christian TV host), tells me that when her church in Damascus started their ministry to Iraqi refugees, she felt deep hostility towards them. Syrians don't like Iraqis and Iraqis readily return the insult. Furthermore, the Iraqi war has spilled refugees into their world like a swarm of locusts, threatening the economy, violating the tranquility.

But they could not turn them away. The Iraqi plight was real. Perhaps living so close to where Paul, hater of Jews, was hosted, at great risk and reputation by Ananias, these Nazarenes set a model of care that spells out a new definition of community. Ananias' gesture of reconciliation transformed the world. This church's service to a disparaged population is changing a city.

This local church now supports and sustains almost 800 refugees. Many come on Monday nights for Bible study—Druze, Muslims, Chaldean Christians, followers of John the Baptist, and together they sing praises to Christ. Others return on Wednesday for food pickup or medical care. Unlike any other ministry in the city, anyone is invited—"come with burqa (Muslim head scarf), religious preference, family condition"—this church cares for all. Some religious entities care only for their own, or Christians. The Muslims route their alms into building mosques, financing madrasas (Muslim schools) or buying guns, I'm told.

Ruth tells me that her attitude has changed. Hostility has dissolved into love. "We have changed. Our people, many of whom are poor themselves, share of their limited resources in incredible ways. Four couples have been assigned to minister in the homes; teams of women work together to package the food items. Doctors are volunteering their services. Medicines come from nowhere. One lady wept to leave this church, as she immigrated to Canada. 'I'll never find as loving a people there as I have found here' she says." For six months, Nazarene Compassionate Ministries International subsidized the ministry. But those funds have run out. Now they live on the scant edge of faith, as they did when they began a year ago.

Whether it be a Roman Catholic actor who, in his passion for Jesus Christ, uses his media to show Jesus' suffering as the universal language of reconciliation, or an Ananias who embraced a pesky Paul, or Ruth and company who reach beyond themselves to serve and redeem an antagonistic people, the message of reconciliation is clear, forthright, and powerful in a fractured and hurting world.

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^{*}not her real name

Chicken Pot Pie

Just came back from a funeral of a church friend. 47 years old, heart attack, African-American. He leaves a bi-racial eleven-year-old son, Warren.

Now, Warren is as bright as a tack, knows Scripture up and down, and has been blind since birth—excuse me, his eyes are sightless, but, boy, can he see things that so casually escape us!

The dramatic highpoint of the ceremony was when the floor was opened for tributes. After a succession of warm and predictable eulogies, Warren was not to be restrained from speaking. He was led up front while our hearts wrenched for private loss. We wondered how he would respond. We all knew that his dad had died quietly in the armchair shortly after reading stories to his son.

Warren's voice piped high and determined, with scarily a waver. He talked about his dad being cool and funny, then concluded his short speech saying, "The one thing I'm going to miss the most is something that probably all of you will say—his cooking. One day he made a chicken pot pie. It had all of the stuff in it that I can't remember. But most of all, it had him in it!"

The congregation burst into applause and murmurs of agreement. Warren, incisively, had captured the essence of his dad's life.

I thought to myself that we do a lot of things in the name of compassion. What is remembered are not the tasks but the spirit, the putting of ourselves in the pot pie, the service, the dreams, the love that is dispensed. As Mother Teresa said repeatedly, "It is not what we do that counts; it's how much love we put in the doing." And the initiative for it comes from a heavenly father willing to put himself into the stew.

I yearn, as a dad, that I, too, will be so remembered.

Why 'Servanthood' is Bad

Reprinted from *The Other Side*, by John McKnight, April 1988.

(Though this article is dated, it raises many significant issues concerning compassionate ministry philosophy. More recent publications on these themes <u>include The Careless Society:</u> Community and Its Counterfeits (1996) and <u>Building Communities from the Inside Out: A Path Toward Finding and Mobilizing Community Assets</u> (1997).

In a small, relatively isolated community on Martha's Vineyard, about every tenth person used to be born without the ability to hear. Everybody in the community, hearing and non-hearing alike, spoke a unique sign language brought from England when they immigrated to Massachusetts in 1690. In the mid-twentieth century with increased mobility, the people ceased to intermarry, and the genetic anomaly disappeared.

But before the memory of it died, and the sign language with it, historian Nora Groce studied the community's history. She compared the experience of the non-hearing people to that of the hearing people.

She found that 80 percent of the non-hearing people graduated from high school as did 80 percent of the hearing. She found that about 90 percent of the non-hearing got married compared to about 92 percent of the hearing. They had about equal numbers of children. Their income levels were similar as were the variety and distribution of their occupations.

Then Groce did a parallel study on the Massachusetts mainland. At the time, it was considered to have the best services in the nation for non-hearing people. There she found that 50 percent of non-hearing people graduated from high school compared to 75 percent of the hearing. Non-hearing people married half the time while hearing people married 90 percent of the time. Forty percent of the non-hearing people had children while 80 percent of hearing people did. Non-hearing people had fewer children. They also received about one-third the income of hearing people. And their range of occupations was much more limited.

How was it, Groce wondered, that on an island with no services, non-hearing people were as much like hearing people as you could possibly measure? Yet thirty miles away, with the most advanced services available, non-hearing people lived much poorer lives than the hearing.

The one place in the United States where deafness was not a disability was the place with *no* services for deaf people. In that community all the people adapted by signing instead of handing the non-hearing people over to professionals and their services. That community wasn't just doing what was necessary to help or to serve one group. It was doing what was necessary to incorporate everyone.

I've been around neighborhoods, neighborhood organizations, and communities in big cities for thirty-six years. I have *never* seen service systems that brought people to well being, delivered them to citizenship, or made them free.

When I'm around church people, I always check whether they are misled by the modern/secular vision. Have they substituted the vision of service for the only thing that will make people whole, community? Are they service peddlers or community builders? Peddling services is unchristian, even if you're hell-bent on helping people. Peddling services instead of building communities is the one way you can be sure not to help.

We all know that at the Last Supper Jesus said, "This is my commandment: love one another as I have loved you. There is no greater love than this: to lay down one's life for one's friends." But for mysterious reasons, I never hear the next two sentences. "You are my friends if you do what I command you. I no longer call you servants, because servants do not know the business of the one they serve. But I have called you friends because I have made known to you everything I learned from God." It's not right to be hung back by service and servantry. The goal is to be a friend.

I'm consistently impressed by how dangerous people are who want to serve others. The service ideology and its systems don't work for three reasons.

First, they constantly steal money from people who are poor. At the center where I work, we've added up how much money the four levels of government—federal, state, county, and city, specifically target for low-income people in Cook County. It adds up to about \$6,000 for every person with an income below the poverty line. (That figure is low; not everyone below the line participates in low-income programs.) For a mother with three children, that's the equivalent of \$24,000. Three years ago, the median income in Cook County was \$23,000. In one sense, we spend more for every poor person than half the people in Cook County make. But Chicago still has poverty!

So I asked our researchers. "Of the money appropriated for low-income people, how much did they get in cash and how much in services? They replied, "They got 63 percent in services and 37 percent in income." Now, if you're a family of four, that means your servants walked away with over \$15,000 of the money appropriated for you while you got less than \$9,000.

Bureaucracy is not the problem. (Bureaucracy eats only about 6 percent.) The money goes to health and human service professionals: nurses, doctors, psychologists, psychiatrist, social workers, public-housing administrators, land clearance officials, and welfare workers. It doesn't go to poor people.

The second problem with service systems is that they base programs on "deficiencies." I fight whenever I can, in legislatures and before policy-making bodies, and against "needs surveys" in low-income neighborhoods. Here is why:

I was organizing block clubs in West Side neighborhoods. I wasn't very good. But people responded. They understood what I was saying. Then the antipoverty program came, and within three years organizing became incredibly difficult.

The antipoverty program sent people out to interview people this way:

"Mrs. Jones, we're from such-and-such. We're doing a survey. Can you tell me how far you went in school?"

She looks down a little and says, "Well, I just got through tenth grade." So they write on the clipboard, "Dropout. Two years." Not "educated ten years" but "dropout two years."

Then they say, "I wonder if you could read this to me."

She looks at it, embarrassed. "No. I can't read."

"Illiterate," they write. Then they say. "Just now you squinted your eyes. Do you have trouble seeing?"

"Yes. I think I need glasses."

"Visual deficit," they write. "Do you have any children?"

"Three daughters, ages fourteen, sixteen, and eighteen."

"Do any of them have children?"

"The fourteen-year-old has a child, and the eighteen-year-old has a child."

"Teenage pregnancy," goes on the clipboard.

Then they say, "We're going to get you some help. Just wait. We're going to make a service center here." And they cash in their needs inventory for a G.E.D. dropout training center and three people who work there, for an illiteracy program with four staff people, for a neighborhood optometrist who is responsive to the community, and for a new teenage-pregnancy counseling program that gets the schools more money. This *poor* woman is a gold mine. That's how she ended up getting one-third what the service system got.

When I go back to this woman, organizing, I say, "Mrs. Jones, I'm organizing for the local neighborhood organization, and your neighbor told me to talk to you. She told me that when her daughter was hit by an automobile down at the corner, you took charge while she took her daughter to the emergency room. And when the tree fell down across the street, you're the one who came out and told people who to call, what to do about the tree. She told me you're the leader on this block. People trust you. People believe in you. People follow you. That's one of the most wonderful things in the world, because you have the opportunity to join with other people like yourself in the neighborhood to begin to do more things than just deal with the tree and the crisis with the little girl. So would you come with me to a meeting tonight?"

"No" she says, "I'm waiting for the people in the white coats."

Service systems teach people that their value lies in their deficiencies. They are built on "inadequacies" called illiteracy, visual deficit, and teenage pregnancy. But communities are

built on the *capacities* of drop-out, illiterate, bad-scene, teenage-pregnant, battered women like Mrs. Jones. If the church is about community, not service, then it's about capacity, not deficiency.

Third, the service system displaces the capacity of people's to solve problems. It says, "Don't form a community organization. Sit and wait for the white coat to come save you." The proliferation of an ideology of therapy and service as "What you need" has weakened associations and organizations of citizens across the United States.

Many churches and pastors have become the agents of systems. They themselves may not understand who they represent, but they refer people to systems. Instead of building community, they help take responsibility away from the community and give it to professionals. People who do this in the name of the church and of Jesus are community busters. They are not agents of Christ.

Here are five rules to protect yourself from being the agent of the devil in the middle of a church. (I could give you ten if I had more space.)

Saul Alinsky referred to the first rule as the "iron rule": Never do for others what they can do for themselves.

Second, find another's gifts, contributions, and capacities. Use them. Give them a place in the community.

Third, whenever a service is proposed, fight to get it converted into income. Don't support services. Insist that what poor people need is income.

There's a point where things called services can be useful. Most low-income communities are well beyond that point. If you improve the professional credentialing of big-city schoolteachers and systems, knowing and wisdom will decrease in direct relationship to the increase in that system's poor. The increase in medical resources in Chicago is now decreasing the health status of poor people.

The fourth rule is a sort of subhead of the third. If those in power are hell-bent on giving poor people services rather than income, then fight for those services to come in the form of vouchers. That way the persons who must be served at least have a choice as to who will serve them. And there may be some competition.

Fifth, develop hospitality. Abraham, the head of a tribe, decided to follow a God who claimed to be the only God. That made Abraham and his people strangers in their own land. They journeyed as strangers through the world. And they developed some unique ideas about responsibilities to strangers because they were strangers themselves.

Jesus' disciples were also people who decided to become strangers, in their own land and in others. They built communities based on their decision. That renewed their understanding of obligations to strangers and hospitality was renewed.

In every household, in every tent, the door was open to the stranger, the outsider, the enemy, or potential enemy. And the stranger was one with whom one acted not in service but equality.

Then a terrible thing happened in third-century Italy. At the side of a monastery, they built a little room for strangers. And they called it a hospice. The church took over responsibility for the stranger. And Christians forgot what had been unique about their community, how to welcome the person who was outside and hungry.

The hospice took hospitality out of the community. "Hospice" became "Hospital." The hospital became Humana, a for-profit corporation buying up church hospitals. Communities and churches have forgotten about hospitality. Now systems and corporations claim they can produce it and sell it and that you can consume it.

You must struggle with all your might to reclaim the central Christian act of hospitality. You will have to fight your local hospitals. You will have to fight Humana. You will have to fight the United Way. You will have to fight the social services. They have commodified hospitality and called it a service. They have made a market of the temple. And you know what you're supposed to do there. Get 'em out! Or bring into the church the hospitality that is at the center of understanding a relationship as a friend not a servant. A church's response to people without should be hospitality not services.



Concientización: Big Word! Beautiful Examples!

In Latin America, there is a big word that trips my tongue when I try to pronounce it. It is "concientización", kind of a combination to "bringing to consciousness" and "conscience" all bundled together.

The English equivalent is "consciousness-level raising," an even more awkward phrase. More particularly, it connotes an awareness of our obligations as people of the Word, to live lives that exhibit compassion and justice for all. It is a word better described than defined.

Two illustrations might help to nail this concept down.

<u>First:</u> Recently, I learned that the Kansas City Rescue Mission raises an offering among the homeless men for Nazarene Compassionate Ministries. Last tally, they had raised \$1,060.05.

That impresses me. These are men who, though earning nothing, willingly share of their means for others that suffer. Their circumstances of life have poignantly informed them about human need. They are not only aware but are prinked by conscience to share beyond themselves. They are experiencing and demonstrating "concientización."

<u>Second:</u> This week my eleven-year-old son skipped school to go with me to my office to be under my watchful care. He was having stomach cramps that left him writhing and crying. No fever, no vomiting, and no localized pain; only contorted agony. I was caught in the parental dilemma of diagnosis, unsure whether I should take him immediately to the emergency room.

Nearby, 8-year-old pretty little Katie happened to be sweeping by. Because I had to leave the office briefly, I propositioned her to serve temporarily as Ryan's nurse. "Do you know how to nurse?" I asked. Without a blink, she responded, "My dad, a medical doctor, has taught me a lot of things about nursing. Yes I'm ready."

I brought her into the office and introduce the two, then went looking for her mother to report her daughter's mission.

When I returned, the tension in the room had receded. Ryan was noticeably more relaxed while Katie spun stories. I asked her how the nursing had gone. "Not so well, I didn't have a thermometer. But I did loan him my locket." Indeed, Ryan was now temporary owner of a heart-shaped locket that encased a tiny picture of her grandparents.

"And what else did you do?" I queried. "I sang to him, because I know that when I am sick, singing makes me feel so much better." (I asked Ryan later what she sang. He reported drolly that she sang, "My Hope is Built On Nothing Less" in rap. Unfortunately, given his lack of enthusiasm, it had died in mid song.

"What else did you do?"

"I wanted to draw him pictures, but we didn't have any paper or crayons. Drawing pictures always makes me feel better."

I thanked her for her efforts and reunited her with her mother.

From her visit on, Ryan's recovery was palpable and thankfully permanent.

Somewhere those parents had instilled little Katie with a spirit of "concientización", bringing to another fresh and favorable results.

On Not Reinventing Boiling Water

Trino Jara is one of a kind! So much so that recently he was temporarily refused admittance at the security doors of Nazarene Headquarters because, with his troll-like shape and leprechaun gestures, complete with Latino color, wild flowing hair and matter-of-fact clothes, he just doesn't fit into the box, any box!

But Trino is a Nazarene treasure! And it is a combination of his wretched history and glorious grace that makes him a pivotal leader in Nazarene compassionate ministries today in Africa.

Born in Costa Rica in the slums north of the capital of San Jose, he never knew his dad. His mother lived with a man who became his stepfather, chronically abusing him physically. At 9, he was forced out of school to work but opted to escape from home, seeking help to continue his studies at the primary level. As such, he entered into the world of street kids, like millions of others throughout Latin America. Even so, he completed his primary schooling but was stymied at the intermediate level for lack of funds.

He watched each of his six siblings also fled the home successively. His twin sisters escaped at age 12, one returning pregnant, the other marrying an abusive man at age 13 who broke her nose at least ten times. Two other brothers took off, one ended up in jail, then drug trafficking, a fugitive to South America, then oblivion.

Trino continues the story in his own words. "I landed at the Church of the Nazarene at age 15. Life in the streets offered little. One day, the Church opened a mission in my city and many of my friends started to attend. I had never been a practicing Catholic, but I learned enough to know that Protestants were demonic and that by attending an evangelical church I was under condemnation. At the invitation of my friends, I always offered excuses to avoid church. One day, one of my newly converted friends invited me to a Bible quizzing competition in the home of missionaries Allan and Elizabeth Wilson. I accepted. Thank God, from that moment I was hooked. I in turn joined the quiz team and soon became an expert in the Gospel of Matthew. Little by little, I started to attend the church until one day I fell on my knees and accepted Christ at the altar during a prayer service.

"Church life was never easy for me. The mix of a military-styled pastor and my street habits caused me lots of problems. I left the church. However, fortunately, I would also land in another Church of the Nazarene. In this way, I became well acquainted with various new church starts, having participated in numerous of these.

"During those years, the civil war in Nicaragua caused great conflict within my own nation. Thousands of refugees fled into the mountains and jungles in the north of my country. God began to speak to me about ministering to these suffering people. A group of us radical Nazarenes—'radical' because social ministry was outside of the box for many Costa Rican Nazarenes—served the refugees by visiting every week, bringing Bibles, clothes, and food until a church was formed and a building erected. However, the leadership at the time never acknowledged our existence, and the church later joined the Assemblies of God denomination. However, God blessed us abundantly during this entire time."

Trino finally acquired his high school degree at age 23 and immediately began to study in the extension program of the Nazarene Seminary in Costa Rica. God continually pressed upon him the need to develop a ministry of aid to the needy. A year later, he took on the position of administrator of a project of childcare for World Vision International. However, two years later, World Vision closed down the project. Impelled by God, he decided to open up a similar project that became the largest development association for indigenous families in the northern suburbs of San Jose. There he worked for thirteen years—training that has since served him well in Africa.

For eleven years, he was coordinator of Nazarene Youth International for the northern district of Costa Rica and also served as director of Compassionate Ministries, an opportunity for him to develop broad holistic programs. For example, in 1992, he and his colleagues organized another association to help young people in rural communities to receive training and generate employment. The purpose of this association was to deter the migration of hundreds of young people from the countryside to the city, a problem that plagues much of Latin America. Thousands of young people migrate for lack of work and then find themselves discarded in the urban environment and open to every human tragedy that the city nourishes. The program that Trino developed, called SURCO, not only serviced the frontier communities between Nicaragua and Costa Rica, but also further formed Trino's expertise for later African service.

In 1997, during the General Assembly in San Antonio, NCM director Gustavo Crocker offered Trino an invitation to serve in Africa as administrator of an agricultural project in Tete, Malawi. Regional director Richard Zanner, seeing Trino's passion and experience in community development, altered his assignment and made him project manager. Immediately, this Costa Rican implant, started to develop workshops throughout the region, empowering pastors to organize and implement committees of Compassionate Ministries throughout Africa. As of this past year, he has been assigned the position of regional NCM coordinator.

Again in Trino's words:

"My great goal is to help the Church develop strategies to respond to the tragedy of AIDS, a disease that directly inflicts up to 20% of southern Africa's population and has cascading social effects on entire populations. On the other hand, it is my hope that Compassionate Ministries be more efficient and aggressive in the generating of resources for implementing new projects. The process is never easy in that for many years there was no training and the caricature of NCM was of Santa Claus passing out money here and there."

"But," as Trino concludes, "God has put me here. Everything that I try to do is just a little for the Kingdom of God. May all the glory be given to God whom we serve!"

When the Nazarene Compassionate Ministries staff assembles to discuss the overbearing pressures of human need worldwide, Trino is a release pressure valve. His wild sense of humor, his odd remarks, his freshness and incurable optimism in the face of relentless horror, wash over the department as a healing balm. Recently, in typical Trino fashion, he lectured CM

representatives on the habit of entrepreneurs to "reinvent boiling water," a Spanish idiom translated across into English. The group laughed in empathy.

But Trino Jara himself, thankfully, has not reinvented "boiling water." He is a product unique and fresh for troubled days in anguished places where the Church of the Nazarene dares to serve in the most practical of ways.

Let's Take It Off the Table

His name is "Meza." Luis Meza. Don't you forget it!

He is one of the developing leaders of the Third World. He is Peruvian, transplanted to Quito, Ecuador. He has a lovely wife, Clarita, and three special children, Denisse, Luisito, and Daniel. He is well educated and most thoughtful in every sense.

He has worked for Compassion, International, heading up their children's program in Peru. In those days he observed that the most abandoned kids were not those that one sees in the streets but rather those confined to their homes unsupervised. Their middle- and upper middle-class parents aspire to comfort and convenience to the neglect of their families.

He has pastored successfully. He heads up the Seminario Teológico Nazareno de Sudamerica. He supervises Compassionate Ministries for all of South America. He also happens to be district superintendent for two pioneers district in Colombia.

But at a more intimate level, I've discovered him to be a revolutionary strategist, breaking molds of ministry out of the inordinate pressures and programs placed on him. I've seen him heartbroken over the needs of the slums of Cartucho, the cesspool of humanity in Bogota. I've seen him work his healing massage into shattered relationships. I've seen him web a philosophy of vision into tired old institutions.

But he caught me off guard the other day when he said that human service projects really are quite secondary. I asked him why.

"Ah," he said, "projects are at the far end of a long process of human development." According to Señor Luis, one must start by "sensitizing" "(sensibilizar) people to theirs and other people's needs and potentialities and to the biblical insights offered. Then one must get "involved" (involucrarse) with them. Following this, one needs to identify not only with the need but also to "identify" (identificar) the resources available. Then, one "empowers" or capacitates (capacitar) those to be benefited. Finally, there is the "organizing" (organizar). Only at this point do the projects flow.

Mumbo-jumbo this is not! This is a well-devised sequence that protects us from jumping into projects that may abort because they were not worked out well in advance. This strategy may save us from the whims of a contributor influenced more by media hype and less by considered perspective.

I, for one, am ecstatic that we've got such a competent and conscientious agent in the field representing the best of who we are. This Meza is one I'm willing to take off the table and to the bank!

Stench and Aroma in Manila

Larry and Lynn Bollinger were previously our Nazarene Compassionate Ministry regional coordinators for East Asia and the South Pacific, servicing 25 far-flung nations as diverse as any grouping in the world. At one point they took a new assignment that placed them in Manila, from which they could radiate their expertise. Larry has solid credentials: an MBA from Eastern College in non-profit management and micro financing from professors the likes of Tony Campolo and Ron Sider. He has also served for five years as program manager for the Kansas City base of NCM, International.

Shortly after arriving in Manila they learned that a lady in their apartment complex had fallen sick and had descended to the ground floor to wait for a taxi to take her to the hospital. It never came, and she died right there. Upon hearing the news, the Bollingers were deeply troubled. They had transportation available and would have gladly served their neighbor. But no one thought of them as available. They told the building administrator to never let such a needless tragedy as this ever occur again, to call them into action should a similar event occur. They then prayed that God would make them tangibly useful to those around them.

Shortly thereafter, they were driving on the road that circles away from their apartment complex when they came across the confused commotion of a horrible accident. Bodies lay scattered in the road. One man was bleeding to death, his leg severed, held together only by a tether of flesh. He desperately needed to be transported to the hospital. Their car was commandeered into service and the victim, along with the driver of the offending vehicle, were whisked away to the local emergency ward.

Recently, as I drove with Larry past the tragic spot, he spied, out in the field, the one-legged man whose life he saved. As he narrated the story to me, he told of how this encounter opened up communication with the employer of the driver who had accompanied the victim to the hospital. This man, a Chinese Filipino, the owner of a large industrial company, and well known in the community was profoundly grateful to Larry for his initiative and expressed it in a variety of ways: a visit to the home, invitations to company parties, and an ongoing relationship that perhaps, someday, will lead to this man's conversion.

Meanwhile, when it is hot and humid, the stench of blood still permeates the back of Larry's van. But the aroma of neighborly care more than suffuses it. Larry and Lynn, watch out! God takes your prayers seriously!

Murder and Mercy in Colombia

Reprinted from *Holiness Today*, Feb. 2003, by Fletcher L. Tink

In Colombia, Christian leaders get bumped off with some regularity, perhaps hundreds in the last few years. These pastors represent growing localized power within congregations, resented by the conservative right, hated by the radical left. Often they are targets because of their North American associations, reputed to be conduits for easy ransom dollars much desired by drug cartels, revolutionary armies, and the paramilitary.

Recently I met Ruth, a young, soft-spoken, light-colored lady in her mid-thirties. She held her fatherless 3 month old tenderly in hers arms, a singular treasure.

I learned that Ruth's 39 year old husband, Hersey Benitez, a successful Nazarene pastor of a congregation of 180 or so, had been stabbed to death eight months earlier. He was the 44th pastor to be killed in 2001, and it was only the month of May. He was walking near his home in southern Bogota when three street thugs accosted him. He could be heard pleading for his life before being stabbed in the chest, in the back, and in the hand. When his wife found him minutes later, he was impaled on a barbed wire fence, dying. He died 25 minutes later in the vehicle taking him to the hospital.

Neither wallet nor documents were taken. No one has been arrested, no motives ascertained. Just another murder.

The Church of the Nazarene has coalesced around Ruth. As we talked, I heard nothing of regret or vindictiveness, only gratitude to God for taking care of her in the midst of her suffering. She is a simple woman, not skilled for singleness. But a church's love has embraced her in ways she so evidently appreciates.

I observed as Luis Meza, the Regional Compassionate Ministry Coordinator, handed her a quantity of money donated by Nazarene Compassionate Ministries, International. This gift could never compensate for her personal pain. But there was enough there for the purchase of two industrial-sized sewing machines that will free her up to work at home and earn necessary cash to maintain herself and her little infant.

She walked us over to the site of the attack and described in detail the events of that horrid night. Then she invited us into her tiny apartment furnished only by handmade carpentry items her husband had fashioned. She drew aside the curtain, revealing a closet-sized space cramped with unfinished wood frames that await disposal. That is where the machines would be placed. She pulled out a little ceramic cup, one of few visible items of serious value in this Spartan dwelling, and handed it to me as a gift.

I took it, realizing that I was only proxy for unseen donors who often wonder where their dollars go, where their "acts of mercy" take form. But I see that cup as both trophy and toast to those who, out of their bounty and security, have shared with one who has rarely known either.

Nazarenes around the world: an interview with Roxanne Alexander

By Mindy Bowne Hancock

Do you want to know what's going on with Nazarenes all over the world? I recently conducted an interview with Roxanne Alexander who oversees all of our Compassionate Ministries Coordinators in the CIS (the Commonwealth of Independent States). Her regional field office is in Moscow, and her home church is Kiev First Church.

I asked Roxanne what kinds of things she did as a part of her job. She told me she oversees 12 coordinators, traveling between their six countries, including: Ukraine, Russia, Armenia, and Tadjikistan. Roxanne is responsible for much of the fundraising that supports their ministries; she does a lot of traveling for this job.

Before Roxanne took this position, Carla Sunberg held it. She and her husband Chuck are still missionaries there and Roxanne works with them closely. Roxanne graduated from Mid-America Nazarene University with a degree in nursing and worked as a nurse before her move to Compassionate Ministries. In 1998 Roxanne left nursing and moved to Kansas City to work as the Nazarene Healthcare Ministries director and also had responsibilities at Nazarene Compassionate Ministries, Inc. When I asked her what led her to Compassionate Ministries, she said it was definitely a call from God.

I asked her about the different ministries that all of the coordinators oversee. She gave me an exciting and diverse list: pig farms, rehab centers, English as a Second Language classes, an orphanage, a homeless shelter, and food and clothes centers. Specifically in the Ukraine, they receive humanitarian aid containers with medical supplies and equipment, clothes, and crisis care kits. She also works with our Child Sponsorship program, which is called Kids Club there.

For Roxanne the greatest challenge of her job is finding all the funding that is necessary to support the many programs in place. The greatest rewards are seeing people's needs met and especially seeing those same people come to the Lord through Compassionate Ministries.

I asked Roxanne if she was currently imagining any new things for the Kingdom. She told me about their latest project: creating small businesses. Small business development could provide not only income for the people but it could also move Compassionate Ministries in the direction of being self-supporting and not having to depend so entirely on raising all of their funds. What an exciting possibility!

When Ripping Clothes and Playing Cards Wins

I have just come back from ten days of teaching and learning in Armenia, a country that has suffered much tragedy. It is a poor land-locked country of 3 million people east of Turkey and north of Iran.

This was the first country in the world in 301 A.D. to accept Christianity officially after the long imprisonment of St Gregory the Illuminator who, in his witness to King Tiridates III, saw both King and country converted. Over time, Armenia has repeatedly been besieged by invaders, culminating in the massacre by the Turks in the 1915 genocide that killed half their population. There was nary a whimper from the international community, setting the table of horrid precedence for a later emboldened Hitler. The Armenians suffered for 70 years under communism and, in 1988, were wracked by an earthquake that killed maybe as many as 100,000 people and left over a half million homeless. Proportionately, this would be 3,000 times more devastating for a tiny country than the casualties of the World Trade Center, and with far fewer resources to pick up the pieces.

I lived those 10 days near in the epicenter of the earthquake, Gyumri. It is a stoical city of 300,000 people, now devoid of manufacturing facilities, of gainful employment of any significant kind. Cold water only is available to most residents for no more than a couple of hours a day. Many locals, who have not been able to move into the tiny apartments thrown up by international agencies and governments, still live in the storage containers that brought in relief supplies. The apartments and houses themselves do not have central heating and rely solely on wood burners and electric heaters.

Yet I found that the material deprivation was more than compensated by the spirit of family and community that my friends there showed me. I discovered what it was to be a child again as my little 10 and 7 year-old housemates, Nona and Rosa, taught me how to skip again, play "paper, rock and scissors," sing endlessly a heavily accented, "Jingle Bells". How is it that, in the inability of languages to communicate, children so grab one's heart? What makes them so naturally serve and love a visitor in their home?

I learned again how to be a man, as my seventeen students, the women in their gutty gracefulness, the men in their unpretentious warmth, engulfed me in hugs and kisses, and unrestrained "I love you's." Most of them barely skim a dollar a day out of life, and hardly know where their next meal will come from, unless from the hand of God. Yet they are so ready to share.

And I learned further what it means to be a Christian. Karen, my male bachelor host-in-country, gregarious, overjoyed in faith, young in testimony having only two years of experience with the denomination, now leads it with flair.

Karen taught me this Lent where faith might take one. He shared that God placed Seryan, the tailor, on his heart and targeted him for evangelism. How could he access the faith to this little man with the open heart? Karen intentionally ripped his clothes, so that he could approach

Seryan, offer him meaningful mending tasks and a little money. Out of ripped clothes, a pastor was formed.

My suitcase did not arrive. I, like many others, had to wear one outfit for days in sequence. Karen, five days later, went as my proxy to pick it at customs with the documentation I had prepared. "Impossible! "You must have it notarized!" the officials declared.

Karen vowed to sit tight at the airport until the suitcase was turned over. In time, a gentleman's agreement was arranged, peculiar to Western minds. The three customs officials, intent on having a card game, lacked a partner. Karen, once a reputed card shark, could win my baggage only if he would join them. He did, to eventually retrieve my suitcase again. Sometimes we must act distastefully for the Kingdom of God!

Incarnation, sacrifice, Lent, "All things to all people," a Jesus whose clothing of flesh was ripped apart for our sakes that we might dress in holy robes... Sometimes divinity's clothes are gambled away, while mine were gambled back home again. There is something about Karen that teaches me about the cost of incarnation and discipleship in reaching those that God so especially loves.

Life After AIDS

The Church of the Nazarene is struggling to find its way regarding the AIDS crisis. It impacts us in numerous ways.

- 1. The changing demographics in the United States and Canada. Once, a crisis found primarily in the homosexual community, it is becoming younger, more heterosexual, more culturally diverse, and is linked increasingly to drug usage.
- 2. Its expansion throughout the world. Seventy percent of the cases are now found in Africa, where 55% of the victims are women. Now, with 35 million a year infected, 3 million people die annually. It is expected that 20 million a year will die by 2010. India, Russia, and China will be the next countries to experience the epidemic.
- 3. With the great evangelistic success of the *JESUS* Film, the Church of the Nazarene is looking at an influx of new members especially in the poorest countries where many of the converted come with severe medical, social, and economic problems. Among these will be many who suffer the effects of AIDS. How will the denomination respond?
- 4. As the Church engages greater diversity of participation at all levels, it will face the problem of people with all their issues.

Two illustrations:

Back in the seventies, a husband and wife from another denomination, involved in graduate studies, joined a class I was in. They were as integrated and enjoyed as any in the group. He graduated and they moved on.

Fifteen years later, I was interviewed for a pastoral assignment at a church of his denomination three thousand miles away. Imagine my surprise, when he reappeared as a member of the board involved in the interview process.

He took me aside, after the interview, to share with me the story of his intervening years. His marriage had turned sour. He had left his wife and traveled to San Francisco to engage in an alternate sexual lifestyle. While there, God got a hold of him and he returned to his marriage.

However, he later discovered that he was infected and, given the times, would probably die prematurely. A Christian university had hired him as professor and he was making his mark as a competent teacher and church leader.

I never took the assignment but tracked his remaining years. They say that the diseased ravished his body, placing him in a wheelchair and then in a hospice. But his funeral was a glorious event of the restorative power of Jesus, who gave him happy and productive years of service to the church and community.

In the early nineties, we initiated a Bible College extension out of the Church as our ministry. In one of the Spanish language classes I was teaching, a young Hispanic took me aside to share with me that he had AIDS. Prior to being a Christian, he had ventured into a homosexual lifestyle and paid dearly by contracting the syndrome. Now he felt called to be a minister. Would the Church of the Nazarene have a place for him?

We talked and prayed. I asked him to share his story with my Sunday School class. The impact of his honesty was profound. We embraced and accepted him. For him, it was release and assurance.

Sadly, the story of our Sunday School class's activities got around. Some in church leadership felt that his honesty complicated things. The young fellow's sister worked in the nursery. Could it be that his disease might be contagious through her in there? Even if such were not the case, the concerns of parents could inhibit their participation. It was decided that she would be let go.

Shortly after, the fellow journeyed back to the west coast where treatment and hospice were more readily available. Some months later, he died. His mother assured me that he maintained his testimony to the end and that his funeral was an unequivocal statement of faith to the gathered mourners, many of who had participated in his former life.

In Spanish, one says, "Hay vida, despues de la SIDA." This means: "There is life after AIDS." And increasingly, the Church of the Nazarene is testifying to this new reality.

A Little African Parable About AIDS

Once upon a time there was a very strong kingdom, where powerful Chief Health reigned. All the inhabitants of this kingdom were healthy and happy. Every day they enjoyed freedom from disease and death. Furthermore, in this kingdom, everybody had all they needed with abundant food and water in their homes.

From time to time, enemies tried to attack the kingdom. One day Evil Flu came to destroy the land. But the mighty army, commanded by General CD4 Cell and his troops of White Globules, overcame the enemy and Flu ran away defeated. On another occasion it was Captain Measles who attacked with all his renegades in an effort to defeat Chief Health. But again General CD4 Cell and his White Globules cohorts were able to defend themselves. A succession of other evil diseases tried to do the same without success. The only one that almost succeeded was General Malaria. He came furiously armed and fought against Chief Health for many days.

Finally, when Chief Health was about to lose the battle, he called in his special elite forces under the leadership of General Fansidar. Together they swept aside the army of General Malaria, killing most of their soldiers.

One day, a new enemy appeared. This time, evil mercenaries under the command of General HIV appeared. This general, the most terrible and inhumane creature on earth, mobilized all the diseases together and shared with them a plot nicknamed AIDS. According to this plan, General HIV could annihilate the kingdom of Chief Health.

The General explained to the gathered diseases his strategy. It was simple: AIDS would attack General CD4 Cell and his army of White Globules from behind. He informed them that the reason they had lost most of their battles against General CD4 Cell and his forces was because they always attacked from the front. The strategy that General HIV and his mercenaries were to use was rearguard action at night.

Every disease supported the plan of General HIV. They agreed that as soon as General HIV had penetrated Chief Health defenses, they would come with their armies to help HIV demolish the Kingdom of Health.

Yet there was one small problem. To attack the army of General CD4 Cell from behind would only be possible if someone was able to infiltrate the Village, initiate the operation, and swing open the front gate. After considerable discussion, they came up with the following idea. What if they bribed some organism already inside the Village, like Mr. Blood Transfusion? What if they were able to infiltrate some of their mercenaries into his blood current? Then they could succeed in our operation.

However, another option was easier. They could use Mr. Sex to tempt and enter the Village and thus infiltrate a group of HIV's mercenaries. Mr. Sex complied, did his dirty work, and many mercenaries switched sides.

Once inside, the HIV mercenaries began their attack from behind on the unsuspecting White Globules, massacring thousands of them. Large number of White Globules mysteriously died. Little by little, the Kingdom collapsed without defense form General CD4 Cell. Unaware of what was happening, Chief Health knew something awful had taken place.

One day, the door of the village was swung open, an invitation for multiple diseases with their armies to invade Chief Health's kingdom. General HIV announced victory and Chief Health and his Kingdom surrendered. In only a matter of months the Kingdom collapsed entirely. Sadly, General HIV and his AIDS operation had brilliantly succeeded.

Widespread Struggle Becomes NCM's Widespread Impact

By Keith Thompson

Only 21 years after its discovery, the number of people infected with AIDS has risen to global proportions. Now considered one of the worst human tragedies in history, experts believe that the number of infections will only continue to escalate. It is estimated that nearly 60 million people have been infected, with approximately one third of those dying as a result. In just six short years, reports of infection grew from 22.6 million in 1996 to 42 million in 2002. Africa accounts for 95% of those infections and adversely shares almost all of the 10,000 daily deaths. 1

AIDS affects every aspect of life for Africans. Caught in a debilitating circle of health problems, a victim of AIDS must deal with being ill and still providing for his or her family. With medications unavailable to 99% of Africans, treatments and prevention are not an option for most victims. The working middle class are typically the most heavily hit with AIDS. This causes further social problems within communities since there is no one to provide for children or the elderly. The harsh reality of this disease cannot be attributed to one factor alone. Poverty, lack of education, large migrations due to war, famine, political inaction, risky sexual behavior, religious beliefs, and various cultural habits weave together into a sticky web of mistakes and tragedy.

In response, Nazarene Compassionate Ministries is actively involved in communities where AIDS has become rampant and proven devastating. Our Africa regional personnel coordinate efforts to build a support structure for those infected and those left in the wake. Creating opportunities for youth to learn about health issues concerning sexual behaviors, providing food in unsure times, and providing health services for victims are just the beginning. Through local churches, NCM and the local Nazarene church empower caregivers to look after AIDS orphans and maintain a family structure. With local leadership and a heart of compassion, NCM is touching lives and sharing hope through Jesus Christ.

Experts believe that as a world community we have only begun to see the damage. It is clear that we are against the ropes, and our best fight is for individuals who are actively involved in those communities and a support network of concerned individuals who recognize the importance of getting involved and making a difference.

NCM is finding solutions to meet the need. With your help we can have a significant impact on the African people by sharing with them the compassion of Christ.

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¹ The Joint U.N. Program on HIV/AIDS, Global Health Update, 2002

Could You Just Hold Me?

Re-printed with permission from *Holiness Today*, April 2004

AIDS. Nasty, sinister, devastating disease.

In reality AIDS isn't one disease but many, a whole complex of falling dominoes—diarrhea, skin lesions, tuberculosis, cancer, just about every medical calamity—because HIV worms its way into the immune system and disarms it. Hence, no protection. And for millions beyond the reach of medicine, no hope.

I've been so saturated with AIDS information over the past month that if it were passed on by osmosis it would be oozing out my pores. Today, 14,000 people will be infected; 9,000 will die. Forty-two million have already succumbed. Thirteen million children have now been orphaned. In only five years, a decade or more has been knocked off the life expectancy of the average citizen in many African countries. And the disease is moving relentlessly into Eastern Europe, South Asia, Latin America, and the Caribbean. This is a terrorist threat of proportion much greater than the one most of us fear.

In Western countries the disease traditionally has been bred primarily through intravenous drug use and homosexual contact and, though not cured, is being held at bay by diet and cocktails of antiretroviral drugs. In the poor countries of the world, especially in sub-Saharan Africa where 70 percent of all cases currently fester, HIV is transmitted primarily through heterosexual contact, placenta transmission and breastfeeding, infected blood, and contaminated instruments used in tattooing, blood-letting, and female circumcision. Sad to say, even the Nazarene-founded hospital in Manzini, Swaziland, cannot afford sanitized gloves for the nurses who handle the fluids of childbirth.

Above the gloom shine two of my extraordinary heroes, Max Rodas of Cleveland, Ohio, and Erika Ríos Caro of Mexico/Cuba/Spain/Equatorial Guinea. They contrast sharply in style but not in purpose.

Max and his wife, Kim, administrate Cleveland's major evangelical AIDS ministry, Proyecto Luz (Project Light), which targets Latinos infected by the disease. The welcome house is catty-corner from the bicultural church Max pastors, New Light Community Church of the Nazarene, and offers preventive education, case management, and spiritual counseling. Twenty or more of the 250 people who have received help and encouragement from Proyecto Luz have now attached themselves to the church.

The ministry's theme is expressed in the words of St. Francis of Assisi: "Begin by doing what is necessary. Continue to do what is possible. Eventually, you will find yourself doing what is impossible." Max says, "I'm shocked by what God has done with us in Cleveland."

Erika Ríos Caro, originally from Mexico, is only 29 years old. A woman of incisive intellect and granite character, this medical doctor has already served on three continents and constantly prepares herself to minister to those most marginalized. She comes as close to a youthful version of Mother Teresa as I have met, audaciously seeking the fullness of God's character in both her life and her ministry. She single-mindedly pursues her calling to care for those stricken by tropical diseases and AIDS.

Erika ventured where the Church of the Nazarene had at that time not yet gone: Equatorial Guinea, a former Spanish colony on the west coast of Africa. She has worked in clinics and in her home and has provided AIDS education to more than 1,200 young people. It was her witness that leveraged the ministry of the Nazarene denomination in that country. Petite and vulnerable in a man's world haunted with demonic forces, she prays, "I do not know how to

swim in Your depths, but one thing I know, that You give me the Holy Spirit without limit, and You will not let me drown except that I submerge in Your Spirit."

Recently I heard former Swazi minister of health and Nazarene missionary legend Samuel Hynd tell of a patient's plea: "I've taken all the pills; I've had all the injections. Please just come and hold me as I die."

Max and Erika, in their separate worlds, have placed themselves where hugs and practical care are given in His name, at great personal cost, again and again.

The "Face" of AIDS: HIV/AIDS

Statistics and Quotes (updated October 2003)

"We now know that the number of people who will die of AIDS in the first decade of the 21st Century will reveal the number that died in all the wars in all the decades of the 20th Century." *Remarks prepared for delivery by VP Al Gore at the UN Security Council Session on AIDS in Africa, January 10, 2000.*

Global Totals:

To date, more than 40 million people are living with HIV worldwide. If current trends continue, that number will swell to 100 million by 2010. (http://pandemicfacingaids.org/en/learn/)

UNAIDS estimates that there will be over 40 million AIDS orphans worldwide by 2010. (http://pandemicfacingaids.org/en/learn)

16,000 infections occur every day—a rate of 11 persons per minute. UNAIDS, June 2000.

Over 90% of all cases and 95% of AIDS deaths occur in the developing world. WHO.

In 2000, 13 million people died from AIDS, tuberculosis and malaria. These deaths could have been prevented by spending as little as \$5 per person in health care. These three diseases kill many more than disasters. World Disasters Report, Red Cross taken from a news report I NYT, June 29, 2000 by Elizabeth Olson.

Demographic Impact:

By 2010, the 19 most affected sub-Saharan countries and the 4 non-African countries are expected to have a total population loss of 76.4 million: East Africa=28.6 million; southern Africa=17.3 million; Central and West Africa=18.9 million; non-Africa=11.4 million. *Children on the Brink, USAID Report by Susan Hunter and John Williamson, 2000.*

Were it not for HIV/AIDS, the average life expectancy in sub-Saharan Africa would be approximately 62 years; instead it is about 47 years. *UNAIDS*, *Dec.* 2001.

Per capita household income for the poorest quarter of households is expected to fall by 13% while every income earner in these poorest households can expect to take on 4+ dependents as a result of AIDS. *UNAIDS*, *Dec.* 2001.

The Cost of Prevention and Treatment:

Three billion dollars would make a massive difference in the quality of life for Africans; compare this with the \$52 billion the US spends on coping with medical consequences of obesity, and it seems a small price to pay. \$6 per worker/year factory workers were trained in AIDS prevention and cut the number of new HIV infections by one-third. *AIDS Epidemic*

Update: December 2000.

Traditional healers treat 70% of AIDS cases in Botswana. Charging \$10-\$20/visit to patients with an average yearly income of \$500, a family's last hope often leads them to deeper poverty. *Fortune* "Death of a Continent" by Brian O'Reilly, Vol. 142, No. 11, November 13, 2000.

Education:

In Swaziland, school enrolment is reported to have fallen by 36% due to AIDS, with girls most affected. *UNAIDS*, *Dec.* 2001.

HIV Testing:

Nine-tenths of HIV-positive individuals worldwide do not know that they are infected. *AIDS Epidemic Update: December 2000*.

Mother-to-Child Transmission of HIV:

In 2000 alone, an estimated six hundred thousand infants acquired HIV-over ninety percent of them through MTCT. (Mother-to-child Transmission of HIV Fact Sheet, UN Special Session on HIV/AIDS. June 2001, New York, USA)

90% of children infected with HIV received it through their mother. *National Institutes of Health Fact Sheet on International Research Priorities*.

Women:

46% of the world's infections occur in women. *National Institutes of Health Fact Sheet on International Research Priorities*.

Youth:

One-third of those living with HIV, are ages 15-24. UNAIDS December 2001.

Nearly six thousand young people are infected with HIV every day.

One child dies every minute of AIDS.

Half of all new infections are occurring among the world's 15- to 24-year-olds.

An estimated 11.8 million youth are now living with HIV/AIDS. (http://pandemicfacingaids.org/en/learn/facts.adp)

Orphans:

AIDS orphans one child every fourteen seconds. ("Orphans and children in a world of AIDS"-

Fact Sheet, UN Special Session on HIV/AIDS, June 2001, New York, USA)

34.7 million "double orphans" or children under age 15 who have lost both mother and father, are estimated in 2000 due to AIDS related deaths. 41.6 million are projected to be double orphans by 2010. *Children on the Brink, USAID Report by Susan Hunter and John Williamson, 2000.*

Around the World:

There is an average of 7-10 years from the time of infection to death. It is estimated that within this decade, Africa will lose 30-50% of its workforce. *World Watch Institute*.

In Haiti, life expectancy is now 49 instead of 57. The status and Trends of the HIV/AIDS/STD Epidemics in the World: Durban Monitoring the AIDS Pandemic Provisional Report, the US Census Bureau, July 2000.

With an average adult HIV prevalence of 2%, the Caribbean is the second most affected region in the world. *UNAIDS*, *December 2001*.

In India, 3-5 million people are infected with HIV. This number doubles every 14 months. *National Institutes of Health Fact Sheet on International Research Priorities.*



The Sad Tale of Brothers Fickle and Tickle!

Once upon a time, there were two brothers, Fickle and Tickle. They lived, worked hard, and prospered in the land of Compassion.

All was well until the neighbors began to notice that Mr. Fickle seemed to be losing his eyesight. He would pick up the newspaper in the morning, as he was accustomed to do, but his eyes would only focus on certain articles that pleased him. The same happened with his television viewing. If the news talked about nice nations and comfortable cultures that he liked, he could see clearly. But if they were nasty and awkward, his eyesight inevitably failed.

At the same time, his brother, Mr. Tickle, began to exhibit a different sort of a problem. He had a nervous tic—a spastic hand that would extend outwardly in generosity—that would manifest itself by reacting and responding to exaggerated stimuli, yet didn't feel anything in the boring narrative of facts. If human need was dramatized in extreme ways, complete with colored images of haggard faces, distended stomachs, body counts and inflated numbers, the tic was activated and he would give relentlessly. But if the real needs presented themselves without horror and gore, he felt and did nothing.

The neighbors were concerned and approached each of them about their individual problems. To Mr. Fickle, they advised that he drop the prejudices and see the world as Christ might see it, apart from political and religious bias, and respond to human need as it presents itself. But Mr. Fickle remained adamant. "There is nothing wrong with my eyes; I see what I see!" he declared. Indeed, the issue became so contentious, he finally cancelled his subscription to the newspaper, and blocked his reception of cable news. And, in time, he saw less and less, until he could no longer see even his neighbors.

As for Mr. Tickle, he was advised to take strong medicine that would allow him to extend both arms out in a more impartial, consistent gesture of generosity. He, too, objected, preferring the jerky motions that had long characterized him. After awhile, the tic abated because his arm grew increasingly sore, until neither arm reached out anymore.

The conclusion to the tale is a sad one. The land of Compassion, rather than being enhanced by these two brothers, was diminished by their presence, and when, finally said and done, Compassion itself was in a pickle because Fickle and Tickle no longer would give their nickel.

[An explanation: This was written after the author learned that in a denominational appeal for funds for refugees, very little was raised. Also, in some of the more sensitive areas of the world, pictures, names, and situations cannot be used in our advertising of needs which are just as real as elsewhere, but cannot be postured or promoted as such. The best way of giving to these situations is consistently and in non-designated fashion so that money is on hand for disaster relief and for special projects, not dependent on crisis responses]

Compassion, Passion, and "The Passion"

No! I will not tell you if Mel Gibson's film rendition of the last twelve hours of Jesus' life is too gory and sensationalized.

No! I have no idea whether it is anti-Semitic or not.

No! I haven't a clue as to whether the ensuing controversy has been contrived to market tickets.

No! I don't know if I can sit through four hours of a movie whose audible track I don't understand.

No! I don't know if it is an effective evangelistic tool for those friends of ours lured into the theater so that we can get a crack at witnessing to them.

No! I haven't seen the movie and so I suspend judgment. But I'm curious enough to probably attend.

However, I am intrigued by the title—"The Passion," which connotes "an intense feeling," an ache of the heart beyond words. If there is any pivotal point in human history that Hollywood with all of its celluloid secrets can dramatize, the convergence of hell's fury poured out on Divine love in the death of Christ certainly is worthy of its cinematographic best.

Jesus' passion ought to traumatize all of us, to the point of shaking the hell out of us, literally! And if Gibson can help us feel it again, then thanks be to him and his cohorts.

I am impressed at Gibson's own apparent passion. To front a film with \$25 million personal dollars and take the personal risk that such an association would imply, hints to me of a commitment to an ideal or personal faith or sacramental act beyond the ordinary. There must be something there of a "feel" for Jesus.

"Compassionate" ministry, like the word itself, must have, at its core "passion", intense feeling, unabashed empathy for others. It cannot be diminished to a program or a philosophy. It ought to be bathed in the gripping sense of the neighborly need that activates the adrenaline, pounds the heart, and drives behavior into transformational response. Os Guinness, in The Dust of Death, notes that "outrage" is a positive characteristic of agape love that, for example, exhibits itself dramatically when Jesus stands before the tomb of Lazarus, his spirit "snorting like a stallion" in the face of Satan-sown death. Later, it is what impels Jesus to drive out the exploitative money-changers in the court of the temple.

Several of our writers this month are disturbed, dismayed and disgusted by events around them. They are passionate and outraged by pressing realities. In the process of their own personal transformation, they now dare to vent their sentiments in order to impact the quality of life around them, be it American popular culture, African disease or Haitian desperation. They dare risk feeling for others because in Christ they have seen passion personified. And, in our Lord's

example, they know that the expression of genuine God-inspired passion can be both therapeutic and redemptive.

Tony Campolo states that when he gives an altar call to invite young people to come forward to be saved, few respond merely to save their own skins. But when he declares that they have been placed on this earth to transform hurting lives, systems, and nations, and that the entryway to such a calling is personal conversion, the altar is lined. Our young people want to be impelled by such passion. In Christ that passion is made most poignant and visible. Thank you, Mr. Gibson, for reminding us of that!

A Dozen Great Reasons to Give

Heard on the news this week was the following story:

A lady pulls up in her limousine to the Salvation Army bellringer and offers the following challenge. "I'll give you \$1,000 if you can give me a reason why I should give to your cause." The bellringer took up the challenge and after coherently presenting his response, she plunked \$11,000 into the kettle.

I am elated for the Salvation Army and for a bellringer who, under the gun, could articulate eleven reasons for giving. Furthermore, I am doubly appreciative of the Army's services, given their compatible Wesleyan-Holiness orientation to that of our own.

I also delight in the recognition of many observers, such as financial consultant, Peter Drucker who declares this charitable organization as "the most effective organization in the U.S." His reasons are documented in a new publication titled, <u>The Most Effective Organization in the U.S.: Leadership Secrets of the Salvation Army, published by Crown Business and written by Robert A. Watson and Ben Brown.</u>

But I swell with pride at the record of our own trio of organizations, Nazarene Compassionate Ministries, USA/Canada, International and Inc. These three components of compassion are accomplishing incredible feats. If a surprised bellringer can muster up eleven reasons for his organization, I think that I can come up with a thoughtful twelve for ours.

- 1. Human need is incredibly great and growing.
- 2. People's lives can be changed and transformed by gestures of kindness.
- 3. The message generosity conveys is consistent with our Church's heritage.
- 4. Money is not the centerpiece; it is only one resource of many.
- 5. Gifts (money and otherwise) are handled with integrity.
- 6. Administrative costs involve very low overhead, around 12% of total budget.
- 7. Sharing with others more needy than yourself is at the core of the Gospel.
- 8. Caring for others is a gesture of fairness; redistribution is Biblical.
- 9. Compassionate Ministry opens up new opportunities for public witness
- 10. Giving is a central gesture of Christian obedience.
- 11. The mechanisms of giving are easy: the United Way, the Combined Federal Campaign (#2018), credit cards, Child Sponsorship and local church giving are all legitimate means of investing in others.
- 12. You, yourself, may someday need and receive of the generosity of others.

I invite you to add your own reasons. Look around for limousines and an anonymous lady who loves to give. Maybe she's ready to ante up some more \$1,000 bills as we together articulate some other wonderful reasons to give.

AIDS and You

Now, let me get this right! AIDS is an acronym that stands for "Acquired-Immune Deficiency Syndrome". In other words, it is a syndrome that disables and deteriorates the immune system so that the body cannot defend itself from the lethal effects of tuberculosis, cancer, and pneumonia, plus a myriad of other diseases. Unchecked, death happens. Now that's a lousy prognosis!

I'm told that the body is made up of interrelated systems that, when one system or organ is under medical siege, shoots out an S.O.S. demanding emergency intervention from the rest of the body. Blood coagulates, therapeutic body chemicals kick in, armies of antibodies march into action, destroying life-threatening germs. With time, a healthy body usually self-repairs with a minimum of fuss. Healthy systems heal disabled ones. Without the sharing of resources, atrophy and death result initially in the sick or injured system then spread to all others alike.

AIDS turns the process on its head. The body fails to fight back. The disease of choice festers and spreads until the whole succumbs. A Death ensues.

Now let's extrapolate the image further to this strange complex organism known as "humankind," made up of individual people not unlike human cells. This cell-person, multiplied six billion times over, participates in community, state and nation, all simulating systems, which in turn, survive on the basis of their individual and mutual health. Wellness is maintained through the interplay of fit and unfit systems or organs. If sick systems fail to send resources to support the weak and diseased, then the body "universal" begins to die. And the existence of humankind itself is ultimately jeopardized.

The Apostle Paul seems to understand this intricate relationship. "In this way we are like the various parts of a human body. Each part gets its meaning from the body as a whole, not the other way around . . . Each of us finds our meaning and function as a part of his body" (The Message, Rom 12:4-5). Or, "The way God designed our bodies is a model for understanding our lives together as a church; every part dependent on every other part, the parts we mention and the parts we don't . . . If one part hurts, every other part is involved in the hurt, and in the healing. If one part flourishes, every other part enters into the exuberance" (I Cor. 12.24-26). Or, in the words of Jesus, "If you only give for what you hope to get out of it, do you think that's charity? The stingiest of pawnbrokers does that . . . Give away your life; you'll find life given back, but not merely given back—given back with bonus and blessing. Giving, not getting, is the way. Generosity begets generosity" (Luke 6:36, 38).

As a church international, our first responsibility is to the other members of Christ's body: those devastated by earthquakes in El Salvador, those consumed by the effects of AIDS in Africa, those displaced by civil war in East Africa, those who face flooding in Bangladesh and Mozambique, those hit by tornadoes in the southern United States.

But beyond that, we are caught in the whole of life as in a web where tragedy, disease, and oppression occur. Our fate is indelibly linked with our generosity to others more needy than ourselves. Those who have are the antibodies, the transfusions, the adrenaline of those who have not.

Failing that, could it be that perhaps we ourselves are caught in the contagion of a spiritual form of AIDS?

Wanted: Enrollees for the Institute for Total Encouragement!

We just received the notice that the Bulgarian Office of Nazarene Compassionate Ministries, formerly known as the Institute for Total Encouragement, has now been legally registered as "Nazarene Compassionate Ministries—Bulgaria."

I'm sort of nostalgic that we've displaced the earlier title. I admit that "Total Encouragement" sounds stiff in English, probably transliterated from "Holistic Ministry." But isn't "Total Encouragement" what we are about as Christians?

I say this is the light of two recent tragic events. Just before the terrorist attacks on the East coast, I was dismayed by a news release out of that urbane, dignified city of Seattle, where a 28-year-old woman, intent on throwing herself off a bridge span into Puget Sound, was egged on by drivers frustrated by rush-hour traffic. Tragically, she did. "Commuters were coming by and urging her to jump and that was on the mild side of what they said. I'm not going to repeat the other things they said," reports a police spokesman. Now there's a case of "total encouragement" of the worst kind, casting forth its shadow out of our collective nature.

In contrast, cold, cosmopolitan New York has shown us, in dramatic detail, the humane side—the raw courage of firefighters and police officers, the tenacity of rescue crews, the selflessness of medical personnel who have sought to save and preserve life. And across the nation, millions mirror their compassion in donated dollars, blood, and prayer.

Nazarene Compassionate Ministries is right there in the mix, distributing 2,500 crisis care kits, providing financial assistance through the Lamb's Club to families of those who are missing, working with the American Red Cross and Salvation Army to make rooms available for disaster recovery volunteers, firemen, and disabled people who cannot return to their apartments, offering crisis care counseling, and recruiting volunteers who are experts in the area of demotion and structural engineering.

At the heart of "encouragement" is "courage." Not that one shows bravura, but that one's actions instill a spirit of courage into the one whose life is faltering, by offering openhanded generosity and shared resources. Extraordinary, indiscriminate Nazarene gestures of care do just that.

Anyone want to enroll in the Institute of Total Encouragement? Applications forthcoming. Diplomas are offered on the other side.

Be Good for Nothing

"Be *good* for nothing . . . good for *nothing*!" The phrase churns in my soul and throbs in my head. Neither medication nor meditation can stop it.

This phrase has weighed heavy on my heart since it was given to me by Rev. Emanuel Cleaver, the first black mayor of Kansas City, MO, and pastor of a Methodist Church a stone's throw from Nazarene International Headquarters.

He offered the challenge based on the experience of Howard Thurman, an African American and one of our premier theologians.

As a young boy traveling to school in Jacksonville, Florida, Thurman was stranded at the train station with a borrowed trunk of personal effects that required an unanticipated additional payment for shipping. With only one dollar to his name, he sat down and cried despairingly. A black man dressed in overalls and a denim cap asked him why he was crying. Thurman explained his predicament. The man took out his rawhide moneybag, counted out the bills, paid the ticket, and handed it to the young boy, then disappeared down the track never to be seen by the lad again. Thurman's autobiography, which recounts this incident, is dedicated to the stranger in the railroad station of Daytona Beach. This stranger was "good for nothing," offering kindness with no expectation of any return.

I think about my projected "goodness," so often prompted by obligation, by paybacks, by IRS deductions, by my evangelical desire to close the conversion deal or rack up brownie points in heaven. But to be "good for nothing"—that doesn't add up.

In our Western world, life is a series of transactions. I give so that I can get, I behave so that I can be treated cordially. With computer efficiency, we put "garbage in, garbage out;" "kindness in, kindness out;" "blessing in, blessing out"—a sort of cosmic binary equation. But to be "good for nothing," aye, there's the rub!

Our family once invited Evelyn and her infant daughter to live with us where she might be shaped by Christian witness and influence. She was from the east coast, of Cape Verdian descent, mired in a destructive relationship. We almost rescued her over this three-year stint.

For some time, she tilted towards Christ and our church community but just couldn't hang on, succumbing to a relationship that resulted in a second child, born out of wedlock. She struck out for independence and acceptance elsewhere and died suddenly at age 34 from diet pills.

One despairing comment she made to friends continues to haunt me: "You guys are too good for me." It is true that we had been artful, insistent in our goodness, always with the hope that we could secure her in the faith. In hindsight, it looks like we failed, and we have been tempted to feel as if the failure voided the value of our good works. But then, could it be that our crafted, self-conscious "goodness" got in the way of God? Through the prism of "good for nothing," this gnaws at me.

An impertinent young man jumps up to Jesus and addresses him as "Good Master" followed by the query, "What must I do to inherit eternal life?" Jesus retorts: "Why do you call me good? No one is good but God alone" (Luke 18:18-19). Despite the double meaning—we know in hindsight that Jesus was God—he didn't want to display his goodness like a banner lest it create a breach with the brokenhearted and provide false fodder for the Pharisees. Furthermore, goodness finds its center not so much in the "doing" as in the "being"—precisely where the seeker had erroneously located it.

Yet, earlier, Jesus had called a tree "good," stating that no good tree bears bad fruit (Luke 6:43). When we compare this to what Jesus said above—"No one is good but God alone" (18:19)—it sounds like something of an insult to us, doesn't it? That is, trees can be good but humans can't.

But I think I get the point. The tree does not bear fruit to win or earn anything. You can shake down some fruit, savor it, and walk away. In return, the tree never submits a bill, counts its losses, insists on a "thank you," nor demands that you metamorphose into a tree. It is just "good for nothing."

Mother Teresa comes as close to sheer goodness as the twentieth century has produced. Yet ironically, the triumph of her kindness, the 60,000+ who died in peace in Kalighat, ultimately were too dead to give anything back. She repeatedly recoiled at characterizations of her goodness.

A Northwest Airlines publication tells this story. The beloved nun was flying from the United States to Mexico and was handed a box lunch. She called the flight attendant over and asked about the cash value of the meal. The attendant, after consultation, offered a price, to which Mother Teresa volunteered to exchange her lunch for cash so that she could feed the poor who would be awaiting her at her destination.

Moments later, she asked the stewardess what was to become of the box lunches. "Oh, we'll have to throw them out!" "But," protested Mother Teresa, "that's such a waste. Can you give us the meals to distribute among my poor?" "Okay, Mother."

A third time, she petitioned. "Can your airlines provide truck transportation and personnel to help pass out the food for the needy?" "Si, Madre Teresa!"

A modern day version of the miracle of the feeding of the five thousand? Pretty close! Good for nothing? I have a hunch that was her secret.

Oh, Lord, unfetter my "goodness" from self-interest, from calculation, from intended outcomes. May I know You as the sole well-spring of "goodness" in my life.

Oh, Lord, when those around me offer me goodness despite my frailty and foibles, may I know that it is You who have enfolded me into Yourself.

Oh, Lord, when, in the deterioration of life, I have nothing left to give back, embrace me with your unqualified goodness and mercy all the days of my life . . . until I reach the house of the Lord, forever.

The Altruism Gene

My geneticist wife, Joyce, informs me that some of her scientific colleagues are hot on the pursuit of a gene for "altruism" or its converse, the "selfish" gene. Just check the Internet.

As I understand it, "altruism" is a predisposition to generosity, to open-handedness, to charitability even when it doesn't make much sense. According to one theory, if survival of the fittest is the ruling principle of life, why do some people seem to do extraordinary gestures at great personal cost for the good of others. It must be some aberrant gene.

If they find it, it will be earthshaking news. Just think: the population could be divided between those who have it and those who don't. For those genetically deficient, no letters or solicitations need be mailed, saving incalculable costs. On the other hand, perhaps medical procedures can be arranged as a corrective to those who indeed suffer.

It would save us a lot of media attention and honors focused on those who give. We would acknowledge that these generous sorts really are fulfilling some biological imperative, and not responding out of pure kindness or divine motivation. Their actions would be simply biological, kind of like salivating for mint chocolate ice cream on a hot summer day.

On the other hand, Christianity radically redefines who we are as human beings. We are more than instinctual, a biological prop for some future generation. There is a Christian logic and a vision that goes well beyond personal or racial survival. We are made in the image of a God who sacrificed himself for human salvation. And all of the cumulative sins of all known generations just don't wipe that image completely out.

Yes, I do believe that there are some people with a disposition towards generosity. It's kind of in their nature. And perhaps we make much too much fuss over them for doing what seems natural. The Bible cautions us not to make too big a deal of altruism. The left hand is not supposed to know what the right hand is doing.

Yet there is something totally amazing when tight-fisted, limited resource people give to those who have nothing to pay back, when kindness is totally illogical, when even one's enemies are is blessed by their sacrifice. That's when I begin to believe that the gospel message has taken hold, that human nature has been infused with the divine, that Christianity is so radical, so gracious, so unnatural. Even Jesus was awed by the woman who offered her only farthing at the plates of the temple. She was counter-cultural. That argument speaks to me of an anti-Darwinianism much more persuasive than all of the evangelical creation institutes on going.

Maybe you know the feeling of giving until it hurts, for those less privileged. Perhaps the "ouch" reminded you that you were not just a biological blip seeking your own selfish ends.

By the way, if, after you have given to those weaker, more impoverished, and more oppressed than yourself, perhaps you might want to offer a blessed penny or two to your struggling scientists awash in their efforts to find that elusive "altruism" gene.

You Are Where You Live

Our family has gone through a conversion! Not religious, though maybe! But a conversion, nevertheless, precipitated by something as simple as a house move.

We have moved from slum to sumptuousness, from poverty, to palace. After twenty plus years of marriage, my wife has saved her pennies and bought and built her dream house. And life has totally changed!

The five of us moved cross country a year ago with a truckful of tacky furniture, into a townhouse that yielded sparse space for all our junk, our living room and one bedroom stashed full of unused furnishings. Packed totes paraded down the hallway; storage boxes stuffed the closets. Our miniscule kitchen was diminished further by a cheap card table—the only sit-down place for three, maybe four of us. Evaporated from family life were meals and normal fellowship.

Only the adult bedroom had livable space; and in it, all privacy flew out the window. The cats cohabited with the girls whose overstocked bedroom devolved into shambles. And home entertainment degenerated into rolling images and opaque pictures of uncable-ized TV. For a year we looked for reasons to slink away from the house. Visitors were denied admittance. Preemptively, we turned down gestures of hospitality lest kindness demand reciprocity in kind. The floors accrued crud and clothing. The sink molded with dishes until we needed them. A toilet and the garbage disposal fell into disrepair, avoiding service because of our reluctance to introduce management to litter. The children's homework assignments chronically disappeared in the disarray.

It wasn't just the house that shamed us; it was the community. Our claustrophobia was heightened by wild all-night parties, discarded beer cans, excessive decibels, a slain deer, and a slain neighbor. Pedestrian peace eluded us.

The kids were irritable and the parents, worse. The air was foul and so were we. We felt compelled to dine, fast-food far too often, and escape to church every time the doors swung open.

Yet, all was tolerable because regularly we would watch our new house on the rise. Our slovenly state was temporary. A new day was about to dawn. And we would be rescued from our self-imposed mess! Ah, finally, the move!

How life has changed! Each child has his/her own room, spacious, spanking new, and meticulously organized. My wife, combating old habits, has issued marching orders on maintenance. We willingly comply. Our lives and spirits have miraculously become tidy and temperate. The kids have space to do wheelies, shoot hoops and bounce ping-pong balls.

Eighty per cent of the world's population is mired in sub-standard housing, many in conditions infinitely more wretched than anything we have known. Their lives hold little promise of homeownership. Yet, I have seen, in the most appalling of circumstances, heroic attempts at

orderliness and hygiene that shame our recent interlude.

Sadly, realities of geography and space, weight families under such duress that any semblance of orderly living is snuffed out of conventional family lifestyles. Transiency, fear, violence, abuse, and mayhem sneak into such worlds unwittingly. Perhaps that is why the millennial dream of Isaiah includes home and property ownership: "They will build houses and dwell in them; they will plant vineyards and eat their fruit" (Is. 65:21). In ways outside of conscious control, we are, more than we are willing to admit, where we live.

Yet God is where we live, too. At the height of the civil rights riots in Harlem, New York City, I visited First Corinthian Baptist Church, where I was the only white among 600 or so in attendance. The service concluded. I so sensed the spirit of God that I couldn't repress a public testimony. The pastor whooshed me down front, while the entire congregation marched by with embraces and handshakes and a smattering of dollars pressed into my hand. Afterwards, the organist hosted me with chitterlings and greens. Harlem appeared so graceful that day.

In Kibera, Nairobi, an infamous slum that fronts the presidential residence, a humble Nazarene family invited me, around the open sewers, through the labyrinth of makeshift passages, across the ankle-deep mud into their tiny immaculate shack. There they served me tea in their single metallic mug and together we prayed. For me, Kibera was transformed for a moment into holy turf, and my hosts, "angels unawares."

In Payatas, an immense trash mountain rising above the outskirts of Manila, 300,000 people glean garbage from the deposits of the day. I was escorted into the shack of a Swiss missionary couple and their three year old daughter who were living precariously on the edge, discipling fourteen youth, ravaged by sexual abuse and addictions. I listened to two hours of reports mixing deliverance with praise. From there, we sloshed through muddy refuse and stench to a makeshift lean-to, patched together with cardboard and plastic. There, ten family members, anemic with disease, scour the trash to collect one dollar a day. Yet, in that primitive home was the spark of hope that somehow the Gospel might offer a better life. My prayers for God's blessing seemed so detached from their reality.

A few yards away, I discovered a strange irony. The water for my tea had been boiled over a combustible fire, fueled by methane gas spontaneously emitted from a combination of garbage rot, moisture and heat. Even in the repulsiveness of trash, God had provided free provisions for the sanitizing of food.

My heart recently leaped with fear at news reports that a portion of the Payatas trash heap had disemboweled, suffocating three hundred of its residents. I couldn't help but wonder if my Swiss family, those transformed youth, and the trash pickers had survived. I prayed to God that they did and are now out of there.

And for those of us who live so comfortably, can't we do better than to stand by helplessly while countless millions of the world's population fight incredible odds to not becoming where they live? If God envisions the day in which his people will enjoy the blessings of homeownership and productivity, what does it take for us to adopt his agenda, too?

Buy Five Sins, Get Two Free

My wife recently showed me a page from Design Toscano's home furnishings mail order catalogue. One pictorial ad caught my attention. The headline ran: "Choose your favorite sin from our seven Cardinal Sins," referring to a series of seven grotesque gargoyles cast in resin "for home and garden use." In bold highlight it further announced: "Buy 5 sins and get 2 sins FREE." What a deal! Thankfully, we resist.

It seems to me that five of these "deadly" sins defined out of medieval Catholicism do come at great cost; lust, laziness ("sloth"), envy, pride, and anger all have apparent personal, relational, and social consequences. Ah, but gluttony and greed, they seem to get a free pass from the moralists. Gluttony is softened as a medical condition and greed is dressed up as "success." And both are hard to nail down as discrete troublesome acts.

Once, I went to a socialist Caribbean nation that was experiencing severe shortages of everything. I was asked to speak at a youth camp where there was no immediate access to food items other than fresh river fare. "Would you bring along the staples?" they pleaded.

I put out a general appeal to the American congregation. Ironically, it was the immigrants and poor in the congregation who responded with greatest generosity. They had been there, known need, and wanted to share. So, I arrived on site laden with sugar, flour, oil, and other food staples.

The camp was a great success. But the young people kept prodding me for an explanation of the Davidic verse: "I have been young and now am old; yet have I not seen the righteous forsaken nor his seed begging bread" (Ps. 37:25). What did this mean in a context where deprivation was so common? Was it merely David's observation in a particular time or place? Was it a generic promise that God has failed to fulfill? Were these campers inferior Christians who didn't deserve what rich Christians elsewhere have? I did not have an answer for them, either then or now.

What I do know is that there is food aplenty in the world for everyone. Sadly, bureaucracies, national barriers, politics, mismanagement, and injustice at all levels have created inequities that produce famine and hunger in so many places in the world.

On the other hand, the Western world is plagued by diseases caused by overindulgence and obesity. The hoarding of our wealth is just a mask for our spirit of greed. Regrettably, our lack of self-censure and open-handed generosity leave fellow Christians wondering if the promises of God somehow have bypassed them.

Perhaps we need a little reminder of the economic ethic of John Wesley, whose motto was "Make all you can, save all you can, give all you can." It is said that when he started his ministry, he allotted a frugal amount for his personal expenses. As his income soared from the sale of his books, he froze his expenses so that that the rising balance all went to ministry and to others. Not such a bad example!

As for the seven sins, they are marketed in our society all too well. Sort of sad, isn't it, that Design Toscano doesn't sell any "Virtues!"

The Mosaic Generation

Written in 2001

My daughters, Melody, 17, and Amber, 16, are "them"; creatures of **THE MOSAIC GENERATION**.

We were the **BABY BOOMERS**; then along came the **BABY BUSTERS**. And now, introducing, **THE MOSAICS**, that generation born since 1984.

According to George Barna, in his recent book, *Real Teens*, he's got them all figured out. So, as dutiful parent, it is my obligation to do the same. My girls listen to raucous music but not to logic. They love their friends but despise fashion. They converse all over the board but don't position themselves anywhere except, thankfully, with regard to their faith.

Barna suggests that we have a love-hate relationship with teenagers. "We love their energy, their creativity, their carefree pursuit of new possibilities, and their sense of hope. But we hate their defiance, their unpredictability, their ease with change, and their propensity to challenge what everyone else holds dear."

He describes their attributes as including "the eclectic lifestyle, their non-linear thinking style, the fluidity of their personal relationships, their cut-and-paste values profile, and the hybrid spiritual perspectives most of them have developed."

Now, don't get me wrong! My girls are wonderful. But I have trouble tracking them. Amber plays bells for the Presbyterians. Melody leads a worship team for the Baptists. They direct their high school Bible study group, and have prayer times daily. They join thousands of crazy kids in Youth Front (formerly Youth for Christ) activities. They converse with ease with charismatic and Catholic yet define themselves clearly as Nazarenes. Denominations and dogma are far less important to them than just doing Christ-type things.

Barna admits that traditional ways of doing Church do not work with this generation. They live in comfort with contradiction, are overloaded with information, are terribly concerned about their future, and are the most populous generation of all. Rational discourse does not work, nor does top-down authority. What does work is engagement and opportunity.

Some years ago, I discovered a phrase on a craggy Boston harbor island that has helped me understand this generation. Scratched out from environmentalist Aldo Leopold, it said: "I am glad I shall never be young without wild places to be young in. Of what avail are forty freedoms without a blank spot on the map?" It reminded me of the Horace Greeley quip, "Go west, young man, go west," which challenged previous generations to resolved rebellion and carve out identities in frontiers no longer available to current youth.

His generation hiked to California, another went to war; mine signed up for Peace Corps. But without frontiers, rebellion strikes out at home and identity development stifles under the family structures.

In a world trammeled by exposure, devoid of mystery, emptied of wild places and blank spots, where do our young people satisfy their ache for independence and identity?

I am privileged to hear ongoing testimonials of young people who venture into all types of novel ministry situations. College students fashion ministries and meaning in Eastern Europe. Some hammer out homes for the poor, while hammering down their hostilities. Others manipulate medicines while salving their own ego needs. Others trek to inner cities to serve the poor while journeying into their own souls.

For Nazarene Compassionate Ministries, International, one conduit has been most helpful, C.A.U.S.E., "College And University students Serving and Enabling." C.A.U.S.E., for twenty years, has sent young people around the world doing compassionate ministry. Out of these new experiences and challenges, lives have been retrieved from anomie and aimlessness. Energy has been funneled into life-empowerment both for themselves and those they reach.

One campus, unable to send a team of youth to East Africa as a consequence of 9-11, has ventured into creative fundraising to fund a scholarship for an African to attend Africa Nazarene University. South Americans, exploiting the example of North American youth, have organized a succession of teams to minister compassionately within their own continent. They await the day when teams can be truly internationalized and the ends of the earth reached.

The Mosaic Generation, with their diversity, numbers, and creativity, might not do mission our way. But what they will do will profoundly affect the character and quality of the world to come. Go for it, kids! In the words of a contemporary hero, "Let's roll!"

"Dissed" at Thanksgiving

I was "dissed!" Big time! For those of you who don't know the vernacular, I checked it out in the Webster Gen-X Dictionary of Idiomatic Terms (just kidding!). To be dissed is to be disrespected, distrusted, and dismissed. The one dissed feels dismay and disgust. So I was dissed by a dozen street kids on Thanksgiving Day.

Many years ago, I counted up my Peace Corps salary pittance and decided, in my abject loneliness, to celebrate a lavish Thanksgiving restaurant meal as host for a dozen or so shoeshine boys who would habitually volunteer to shine my "tennies" at the central bus station in Brasilia. At times, when I did dress up in leathers, they would compete, portable shoe shining kits in hand, to spiff them up for a generous 20 cents. They would do a bang-up job and I would drink in the culture through their prattling in Portuguese.

Thanksgiving is unheard of in Brazil. It doesn't even translate well—something about "actions of grace." It is, as in most of the world, just an ordinary day. Even in Canada, they rush it in a month earlier, to avoid the bitter cold.

Thanksgiving is something of an anomaly even for the United States. It sort of implies that during the rest of the year, we are thankless. We celebrate it by feasting our corpulent faces and hanging out with our families. Maybe, National Anxious Day or Worry Day is more fitting to our corporate character.

Anyway, that year I wanted it to be different. I had announced my intentions a week earlier to my little street urchin friends; I even gave them formal invitations as we together dreamed about a restaurant experience they heretofore had never had. And I thought that maybe I could angle some Christian witness into the middle of it all. They chattered with enthusiasm about the possibilities and assured me that they would be in place, tattered rags and all, but with scrubbed faces.

With a month's salary in hand, I hastened to the meeting spot and waited and waited. They never came, neither to celebrate nor even to install themselves in their customary shoe shining spots. Two hours later, I left, deflated, to eat Thanksgiving in solitaire.

Some days later, I encountered them. No explanations! They just plain forgot! Until a new reality hit me, no one volunteers such generosity to these kids unless they are predators buying favors. They were scared. My story about "Thanksgiving" in their juvenile minds was a concoction to seduce them, and they chose avoidance. Brazilian politeness does not accommodate verbal turndowns; but their actions often betray their true reactions.

I learned a lesson. Charity and compassion only work when they resonate with the context. For a group of street kids systematically abused, a strange young man from a foreign culture offering random acts of kindness makes no sense at all unless interpreted perversely.

We Westerners like to think that we are compassionate and generous often in complete disregard of context, of local perceptions. Sometimes what we give is as artlessly done as dropping care

packages out of planes on the tops of heads of the "needy." Sometimes, there is no other way to do it. Sometimes, no way is better.

There are many agencies out there that offer rescue operations of charity that intercept cultures and crises with kindness, and then walk off. Many parachurch organizations target a need, give generously, but don't enhance the overall quality of life because they cannot address people in their full context.

Recently, I was talking to a World Vision staff member. He complimented the efforts and the structure of the Church of the Nazarene for its compassionate services worldwide, almost envious of the fact that we have personnel, leadership, churches, and delivery systems throughout the world already set in place to respond to disasters, human tragedies, and systemic collapses with the click of a mouse or the signing of a pen. We respond to people not just to give relief but to offer hope, purpose, community, and wholeness. That is why World Vision, Campus Crusade, Compassion International, World Relief, and other faith-based human service agencies often partner with the Church of the Nazarene to get the job done effectively.

Compassion invariably needs to be linked with "incarnation." Incarnation is not just a warm fuzzy theological word. In fact, at times compassion turns ugly, such as on the cross. It is not something that you do for others, but rather something that you do with others. It is, as St. Augustine suggested, an "exchange of gifts;" the only problem is that the gift you get may not be what you anticipated, such as—forgive the repetition—a cross.

In my scouring of the world, I've seen some of the crosses born by my compassionate Nazarene brothers and sisters—a medical doctor killed in a hijacked plane coming out of Africa, five Cambodian presenters of the JESUS Film martyred and two missing elsewhere, a national pastor kidnapped multiple times in South America, a CAUSE coordinator killed in a plane crash in Central America while doing a pre-site visit, two pastors' daughters raped as a political act. They took the risks that compassion implies and suffered consequently. It is not my random acts of kindness that dart in and out of the context that count. It is these and many others' lifelong commitment that tough it out where sentimentalized love wears paper-thin. For them, compassion is a lifestyle, not a leisure.

For them, to them, I am eternally thankful!

Cycling through Life

A perceptive professor once told me that life cycles in Western countries can be divided into three stages based on the most important possessions appropriate to the age.

In the first third of life from 0-25 years, music ranks highest. Consider the power of MTV and the music culture in general as it markets to the youth.

During the second stage from 25-50, one values the home as the premier object of importance. It is a symbol of "having arrived" when one finally owns his/her own property.

In the third stage after 50, the primary object of value becomes photographs, offering reminiscences and a sense of social connectedness.

It all makes sense to me! My teenage kids now monopolize my car radio—it's always music, loosely defined. My wife is outfitting her new house; says she wants to stay home more. I'm into getting old film developed and organizing albums in a last-ditch gesture of purpose before fading off into the sunset.

I don't know how this translates into non-Western cultures. From my casual observation, it seems that youth bop to music everywhere. And homes—100 million people worldwide don't have homes (700,000 homeless in the U.S.) or what they have is so rudimentary that the residence itself is a carrier of disease and danger. As to photographs, many people have neither the technology nor life span to enter into that phase of life. In twenty-five countries, the residents do not expect to live to 50 years of age.

The Indian male life cycle has its own peculiarity. The final stage of a mature male who has provided sufficiently for his family is one where he is liberated to seek spiritual solace and satisfaction, often requiring that he leave his family and pursue his adopted guru into asceticism and pious exercises prior to facing death.

Many of my friends have wearied of looking at photographs and wish to enter into full tranquility with God and others. They go on their own pilgrimages under the rubric of Work and Witness, Harvest Partners, and Nazarenes in Volunteer Service, to serve others, to piece themselves out in a thousand creative ways. In so doing, they discover a revitalized melody ringing in their souls, a new home adorning their relationships, and fresh memories imprinted on their minds that they will take with them into eternity. That's a cycle guaranteed to never slow down!

Valuables and Values

A new phenomenon has appeared since the September 11th terrorist attacks. It is the writing of "ethical wills."

Apparently, with death lurking in once secure corners, many Americans are adopting the legal option of writing wills that express personal values as a final legacy to their offspring. Just check out the Internet site www.ethicalwill.com or read Barry K. Baines' book, Ethical Wills: Putting Your Values on Paper. There is even a newsletter available, along with seminars and workshops.

Typically, one's last will and testament designates the assignment of material possessions to descendents, friends, and organizations. Yet these documents rarely express the motivations and values that have guided the life of the deceased. These ethical wills are being offered as additional documents that share intimately the attitudes and principles that have guided one's life.

Now, there is nothing entirely new to this. Old Testament patriarch Jacob cut loose verbally when, on his dying bed, he addressed each of his sons by name and offered running commentary that slashed surgically. Reuben is accused of sleeping with Jacob's wife, Simeon and Levi are "gruesome swords," Issachar is described as a donkey; and Dan as a snake.

Now I don't suggest that an ethical will is the place to get in a last jab or correct all wrongs. But if our lives have been guided by principles of fairness, compassion, godliness, and goodness, it seems to me that the starchy legalisms of material wills, by their omission of values, send a rather definitive message that possessions are the point of life, and not much more.

In contrast, there is Paul, in 2 Corinthians 4:1-11 who compares his life to a "clay jar" in which the treasure is stored ... we suffer, but are never crushed ... we are knocked down, but we get up ... we face death every day because of Jesus ... but life is working in you. How's that for a legacy!

How much better it would be to express why one has chosen to disperse material blessings in the way that one has, thoughtfully and prayerfully, chosen. But beyond that, should not we Christians leave a written legacy that speaks of values not confined to the material, such as the importance of compassion as a lifestyle or the love of holy community?

Now, those are the values that I don't find immaterial!

The Sacrament of Consumerism

For me, 1955 was a special year to remember. I moved from my childhood years of dark and dank inner city London to spacious and spectacular Canada. It was also the inglorious year that North American spending habits took a critical turn.

Up until 1955, we were "customers." Then we were declared "consumers." An oft-quoted statement by Victor Lebow summed it up in stark terms: "Our enormously productive economy . . . demands that we make consumption our way of life, that we convert the buying and use of goods into rituals, that we seek our spiritual satisfaction, our ego satisfaction, in consumption We need things consumed, burned up, worn out, replaced, and discarded at an ever increasing rate."

Wow! It sounds like Lebow is a marketing guru, offering us alternative spiritual experience. Buy, buy, use, discard and buy, and you'll get saved. Your national and spiritual meaning depend on it. Indeed, let's trade in that tasteless communion bread and wine for the ecstasies of everything else that we can devour!

Teenagers apparently have gotten the message. Ninety-three percent of American teenage girls say shopping is their favorite pastime. Eighty-two percent of us agree that "we buy and consume far more than we need." Among industrialized nations, Americans are number one in private consumption and last in saving. Even our president, after the horrors of the World Trade Center terrorist attack, encouraged us to go out and buy and spend with the abandon of earlier days. Down with sacrifice! Up with self-indulgence! It is our patriotic duty!

Now, I realize that the issues are much more complex than suggested here. There is such clean logic for continuing what we are doing. But I do wonder if our economic success is built on an Enron-mirage of infinite possibilities and resources unchecked by reality.

Worse yet, I can't seem to get away from the distressing words of Jesus:

"Beware and be on your guard against every form of greed; for not even when one has abundance does life consist of his possessions. For life is more than food, and the body more than clothing, for where your treasure is, there will your heart be also" (Luke 12:15, 23, 24).

"No one can serve two masters; for a slave will either hate the one and love the other, or be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and wealth" (Matthew 6:24).

"Woe to those who add house to house and join field to field until everywhere belongs to them and they are the sole inhabitants of the land" (Isaiah 5:8).

But then, Jesus wasn't such a good American, was he?